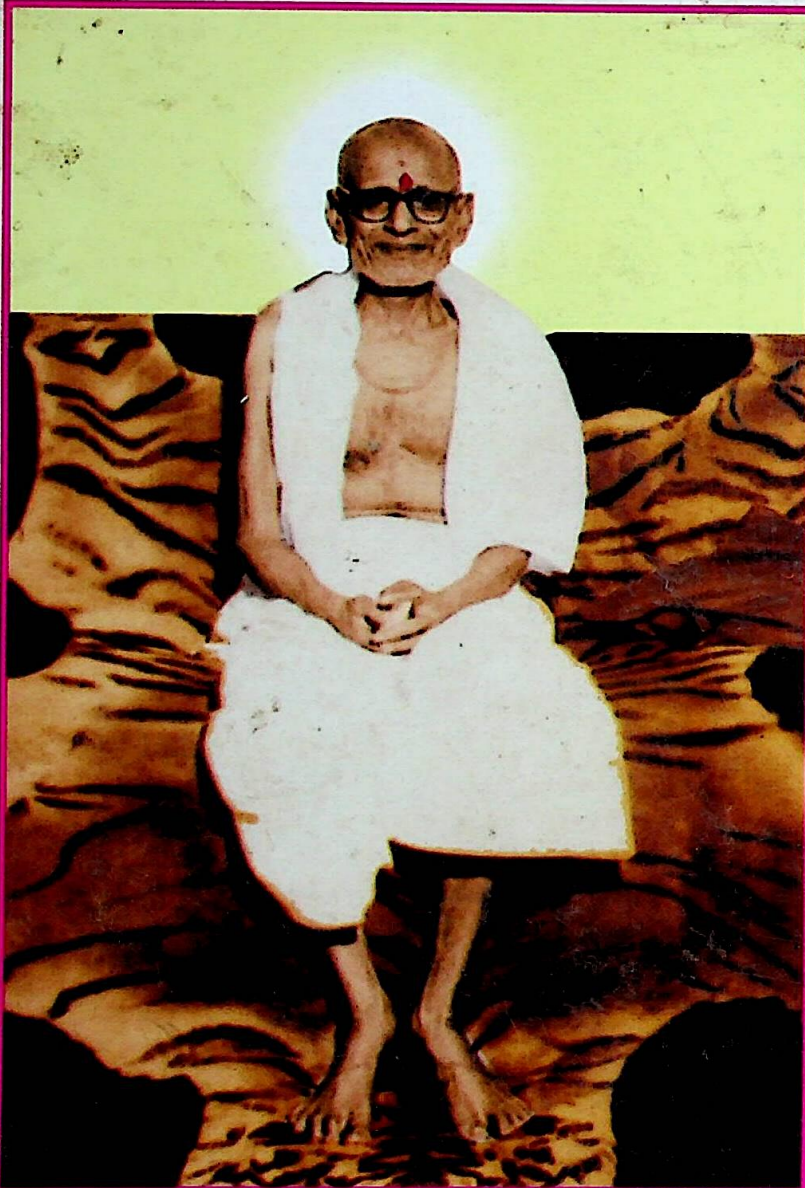


MY GURUDEV



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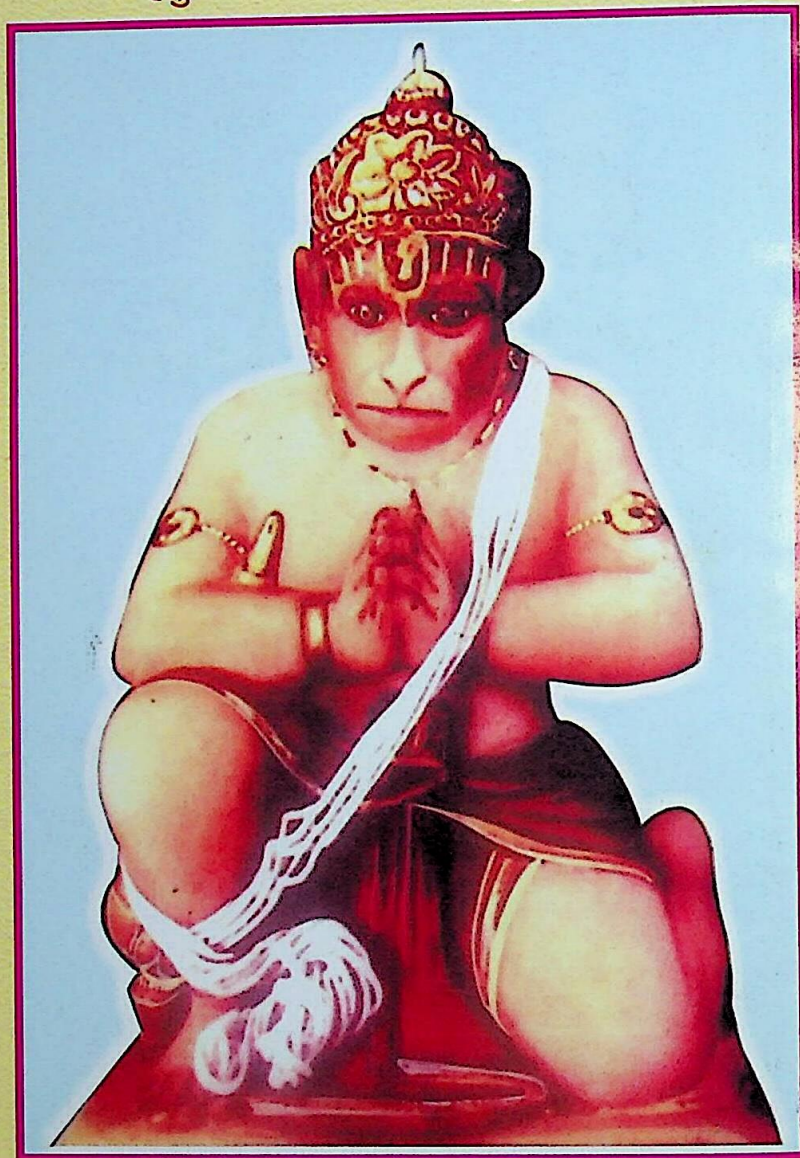
युगल सरकार श्री सीतारामजी - रघुवीर मंदिर चित्रकूट



गिरा अरथ जल बिचि सम, कहियत भिन्न न भिन्न ।
बंदउँ सीतारामपद, जिन्हहि परमप्रिय खिन्न ॥

सो अनन्य....

श्री हनुमानजी महाराज - चित्रकुट (म.प्र.)



यत्र यत्र रघुनाथ कीर्तनं, तत्र तत्र कृत मस्तकांजलिम् ।
बाष्पवारि परिपूर्णं लोचनं, मारुति नमत राक्षसान्तकम् ॥

MY GURUDEV

"Lead kindly Light"

MY GURUDEV

(An abridged Life Sketch of Saint Shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj)

: Author :

Kum. Damyanti V. Sejpal

: Translated By :

Gordhandas B. Suchak

Publishers.

Shri Sadguru Sadan Trust

Kuvadava Road,

Rajkot.

MY GURUDEV

Publishers.

Shri Sadguru Sadan Trust,
Kuvadava Road,
Rajkot.

Price Rs 100/-

2nd Edition

Vaisakh Shukla-9

(Janki Navmi)

Vikram Samvat-2074

April-2018

Labh Printers
Ahmedabad.

Available at :-

- (1) Shri Sadguru Ashram**
Kuvadava Road,
Rajkot-360003
Phone: 0281-2457009
- (2) Shri Sadguru Seva Sangh Trust**
Mafatlal House
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Janki Kund, Chitrakoot (M.P.)
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MY GURUDEV

"Had we not man with us Royal,
Man Master Of things"



"रघुवरचरन सरोज रज निज मन मुकुरु सुधारि ।
बरनउँ गुरुवर बिमल जसु जो दायक फल चारि ॥"

*"Having purified my mental mirror, with the sacred
'charan raj' of Shri Ram, I now commence the narration
of shri Gurudev's sublime and divine life"*

Few Words

Everybody wish to have happiness. Though struggling so much, one cannot gain the real happiness; because of improper knowledge or lack of proper guidance or 'Guru'. The word 'Guru' is consists of two words-'Gu' and 'Ru'. According to sanskrit, 'Gu' means darkness, ignorance which is the fundamental reason for all the miseries and unhappiness. 'Ru' means the remover of darkness - ignorance. So as one who removes our internal as well as external darkness -ignorance is the 'Guru'.

Means, one cannot achieve the real and absolute happiness and peace in the life without spiritual (retaining to soul or self) knowledge, means removing of ignorance about the spirit (soul). For this, one should have the proper spiritual guide or 'Guru', is the most necessary. We are the most fortunate that we are blessed by well defined 'Guru' Pujya Shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj.

But without knowledge of real (true) 'Guru' people are mislead and cheated by hypocrite, deceitful, pretender. But don't worry, this book gives you the true introduction of real and genuine Guru, saint, sadhu, sannyasi, ascetic, monk or mahatma whatever you may call.

The book 'Mara Gurudev' (Gujarati) is translated in English in the form of 'My Gurudev' by Shri Gordhandas B. Suchak and its first edition was published by Vimlaben Gordhandas Suchak Trust (Mumbai). We express hearty thanks to them, and to Kum. Damyantiben V. Sejpai, who permitted us to publish this book.

We also thank Dr. Laxmanbhai Kathiriya, Satishbhai Khandhadia and Darpanbhai Kakkad whose noble and selfless services and efforts have made it possible to publish this book.

Here we would like to bring to your kind notice that you (Readers) will be lucky if you grab the opportunity to read other books also which are full of with sermoning words of venerable (pujya) Shri Gurudev.

It may be a great loss to the person, if one has not followed the real devotional and spiritual life, One will not have lived the REAL

MY GURUDEV

life. 'Shri Ram Charit Manas' says that 'Haani(loss) ki ahi sam kachhu(like to this) bhai; bhajia (devotion) na (not) ramahi nartanu payi (even obtaining human body).

We assure that you will definitely get important informations plus most importantly feel internal and external happiness, peace, enjoy reading and will obtain a thorough guidance of real spirituality, the purpose of the life, real devotion and the way of obtaining universal happiness forever. Let us pray to our Gurudev for blessing for all.

Shri Sadguru Vandan- Jay Siyaram- Jay Bhagawan

**Shree Sadguru Sadan Trusrt
Sadguru Ashram,
Kuwadava Road
Rajkot - 360003**

"Shri Sadguru Parmatma ne Namah"

PREFACE

"Ben ! What are you writing next?" Poojyashri Madhavlalbhai Acharya Of Shri Ranchhoddasji Pathshala asked.

I gave a short reply "Nothing, I have already given all important extracts of shri Gurudev's speeches in the book 'Manav Drishti'

"How Strange !" He said ,refusing to be put off by such a reply and added " After being close to Gurudev for 12 long years ,how can you say such a thing ?" And Continued "Write about what you might have heard from him,and experienced about his sublime and devine deeds,write about his characteristics,his principles, his work of social welfare, because this act of yours will itself be a service unto him ". I left noncommittaly.

But his remarks set my mind in a whirl. Whatever one could write about saint , who is in his lifetime had influenced people that they called him 'Bhagwan', would still be far short of real things .

However for me,the attempt to write about him with my limited power of narration and experience would be like setting a mosquito to measure the extent of infinite space.

But Acharyashri persisted with his enquiries and encouragement. At last his inspiration and wishes made me take up the pen.

The first help came from Poojyashri Haricharandasji Maharaj,Mahant of 'Ram Mandir' at Gondal,who had the good fortune, during last 22 years, to be in Gurudev's presence and observe his miraculous powers at first hand.

Poojya Maharajshri was maintaining a note book and the words "You may use this material as you may deem fit".He handed it over to me and I am extremely grateful to him for his generous assistance.

After that, several devotees from Gurudev's inner circle spoke to me. Some of them called him by the fond name 'Mama' while for the others,he had become 'Mamaji ' on his own .

MY GURUDEV

Since Gurudev's love and adoration for all was equal and without distinction or discrimination ;after narrating their experiences ,each one would say with emotions "Ben! I do not think that any one else had the good fortune of obtaining so much love and affection as I have obtained from Bapu"

Be it rich or poor,learned or ignorant, villager or city dweller, I never came across a single person who said that "Bapu was not mine and he did not love me ". So universal was the power and potentiality of his love.

He had innumerable disciples, I have been able to talk only to a few of them, yet I can say it with certainty that each one of his devotees must have experienced the sublime love and power of Gurudev's magnetic personality to some extent.

Poojyashri's personality can be compared with the sun, the light and warmth of which is available to all who are desirous of obtaining it.

I heartily thank all those devotees, who have given me material for this book along with their good wishes.

I am also grateful to Shri Krishnashankar Shastriji and Kum. Geetadevi for their unstinted support.

On account of your keen interest and reverance for Shri Gurudev's life ,so far six editions have been published. Many from our younger generations have approached me to explore the possibilities of having an English translations and abridged version of the book saying that they are not to proficient in Gujarati or in Hindi.

I requested shri Gordhandasbhai a Civil Engineer by profession, and he readiky acceded to my request and has done admirable job as his reverential offering to shri Gurudev.

In the original Gujarati, I have headed and even ended most of the chapters with a couplet from Ramayan or similar devotional literature because the same was dear to Gurudev's heart. The translator, maintaining this tradition , has quoted , where appropriate , in or at the end of the chapter couplet or quotation from English and other literary or philosophical works of poets and thinkers.

MY GURUDEV

In his "Translator's notes", he has clarified certain points consequent upon abridgement and limitations due to translation from Gujarati to English, and I request the readers to take a special note of the same.

Let me make one essential clarification. Whatever that you may find good, readable and worthy of emulation in the book is that of shri Gurudev, and on account of his infinite grace but whatever that may be disjointed or inappropriate may kindly be forgiven as my own deficiency alone.

I will never be able to forget, even for a moment the powerful, compassionate, generous and adoring personality of Gurudev. His love for the oppressed humanity can never be matched but we can only try to emulate him and continue his good work.

I will end with the humble prayer "May Gurudev's benign grace and blessings be showered on all of us"

Guru Poornima.

28- 07-1999

- Jai Bhagwan.

- Damyanti Valji Sejjal.

A-11, Sukhmani,
10th rd. Juhu Scheme
Mumbai- 400049

*'Writers there were many in thy hall,
yet thou commanded me to write ;
and with the farspreading wings of my thoughts,
I touched thy feet , which I could never aspire to reach"*
- Geetanjali

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Translator's notes

“Behold how shines that weak and solitary candle,
in the encircling darkness,
So shines a good man in this naughty world”

Gurudev was much more than a candle, perhaps the Sun and therefore his life and works have shone and are still providing a shining example and shall continue to do so far all time to come.

Having paid my homage to the great saint, let me put in a word of caution. If you know both Gujarati and English equally well, then put down this book, go out and find out the—Gujarati edition, because I have translated Damuben's 'Magnum Opus' with great hesitation due to limitations in translation on account of following factors:-

- (1) Compared to Damuben's well read and scholarly vocabulary in 3 languages, Gujarati, Sanskrit and Avadhi and the fact that on spiritual matters, compared to our own indigenous similies, metaphors and idioms, English can never be an adequate substitute.
- (2) Secondly, on certain occasions, due to our being accustomed to the speed of remote controlled fast changing T.V Channels, the narrative may appear stilted and even disjointed due to slow pace at certain places. However, I have put in my best efforts, and even if one out of a thousand children of original devotees, who has not been able to read the book in Gujarati, and now if one can read this and derive inspiration from Gurudev's life to advance a little faster on the spiritual path, then my efforts would not be in vain.
- (3) I humbly ask for forgiveness in advance, if inadvertently at certain places, the reverential prefixes of “Shri”, “Poojya” and suffixes of “bhai” and “ji” have been dropped,
I have put certain untranslatable spiritual and religious words in italics or retained them as they are.

MY GURUDEV

On account of limitations of abridgement, certain incidents and narratives had to be dropped, for which I may kindly be excused.

I am thankful to Shri Nimeshbhai Kheraj Charla of M/s Neekita Printers for his cooperation and unstinted support for having permitted me to do several corrections from time to time.

As a humble effort of mine, I put this translated and abridged version in the hands of the present generation of Gurudev's disciples quoting an urdu couplet;-

*"Rehmat pe teri, mere gunahon ko naaz hai,
Banda hoon, Janta hoon, Toon banda Nawaz hai."*

*"I make mistakes due to my faith in your forgiving nature,
O Merciful God! You are my master and I am an erring yet
humble servant of thine and thine alone"*

-Gordhandas B. Suchak

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"Shri Sadguru Parmatmane Namah"
A Saint is born

Chapter -1

*"Of saintly race by birth,
but nobler yet in his own worth".*

Our's is a holy land , in which even God prefers to take birth. Though god is formless and essence of all things, yet on certain occasions he chooses to manifest himself in human form as a saint. Then having strengthened the basics of religious faith and after giving immense ecstatic joy to his devotees, who follow the 'nine fold path of devotion' he leaves our world once again.

Such Saints are not bound by National or Ethnic boundaries and they may manifest themselves at any period of time and country.

The family of their birth is indeed blessed, their mother twice so, because having given birth to such divinity, she gets liberation from this endless cycle of birth – death – rebirth.

Sant Shiromani Bhagwan Shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj was born in a Maharshtrian Deshastha Brahmin family in a small village Bifal in Central Indian State several centuries ago *(time not known) , on Kartik Chaturthi of shuklapaksha. Since his grandfather was chief priest of Gwalior state, his birth was celebrated in public.

In this festival, an unknown artisan came, saw the child and having gifted an idol of Shri Ram to the child, he quietly departed, as if he had come from nowhere.

* Let me say right here and now to the scientific and logically inclined people about all miraculous incidents in the book:-
"For those who believe, no proof is necessary ,
For those who do not believe, no proof is enough"

This unusual gift of an idol, instead of toys, sweets, clothes etc. for a child, puzzled every one. At the time of Shri Ram's birth in Ayodhya Lord Shiva came for Darshan in the guise of an astrologer and after predicting his birth and brilliant destiny and telling it to Mata Kaushalya, he too had departed in similar manner.

It seems as though this incident was repeated on Gurudev's birth. Some divinity came to have a glimpse of the child, and by gifting an idol of Shri Ram, hinted at the fact that in 'Anshavtar' form, the self same Ram was present in this child, and that the child would carry further the works of Shri Ram in the field of social welfare and propagate devotion to the lord among his followers.

On the 12th day of 'Namkaran', to add spice to sugar, Poojyashri was named as Ram Rao

How significant! Gift of an idol, name of 'Narayan' (Ram) and all the child's future activities were for and on behalf of the almighty God.

* * *

When the child started baby talk, the first words uttered by him were 'Ram', 'Ram'. As he grew up, the child considered that the chanting of Ram-Nam with ecstasy was the only worth while activity. The mother too felt likewise. Events passed in quick succession before her simple mind's eye – The unknown artisan's visit, gift of an idol and now the child's innocent baby talk and chanting.

Despite his tender age of 10 and notwithstanding the fact that his parents, his elder brother and adorable younger sister loved him so much Gurudev decided to leave Bifal and his family for good.

By hind sight we may rationalize such an unusual act in Gurudev's own words;-

"I left because of my disinterest in worldly pleasures, exclusive love of God and compassion for sufferings of others. Once I saw one man torturing another, this sight depressed me so much that I decided to leave at once. I do not remember anything more beyond that - - - -

Truly the poet says;-

*"It grives the Saints,
When they do see,
What man has done to man"*

Intuitive learning

Chapter - 2

On leaving Bifal, Gurudev was drawn towards Ayodhya, the birthplace of Shri Ram. There the child Ram Rao stayed among a group of sadhus of the Naga cult.

Taking advantage of his tender age these 'Sadhus' overburdened him with menial work, but he took all this in his stride as though this was the first step towards '*Tapasya*' and worked cheerfully.

On a fateful day, when Ram Rao was sitting on the banks of river Saryu, the brilliant saint Patit pavanji Maharaj of Ramanandi Vaishnav Panth, happened to pass along and seeing the child, he spoke out as if unwittingly, "Ram ! Alas you have come, I was waiting for you"

"Gurudev greeted Maharajshri with Sashtang namaskar and said "I wish to come with you" and he narrated his hardships and asked with a childlike simplicity and expressed his fears "will they beat me if I accompany you".

Maharajshri replied in a confident tone "Follow me, none can stop you",

Gurudev followed him fearlessly and the Naga cult watched the departure of the divine pair as if dumbstruck, and with wondering eyes.

* * *

Later, Maharajshri gave him the '*Virakti Diksha*' and instilled in him love and service of humanity.

Now as a '*Virakta*' (Unworldly), after initiation, he was named 'Ranchhoddasji Maharaj'. He was taught Yoga, Philosophy and ritual worship of Shri Ram.

Later Maharajshri lovingly ordered Gurudev to travel all over India for first hand experience. During his "PadYatra", Gurudev studied essence of several prevalent religious such as Buddhism, Jainism, Swaminarayan Dharma etc.; and came in contact with their main theologians.

As he came to know more and more, his curiosity knew no bounds. He exhaustively studied all prevalent philosophies and theological literature. As a result, he achieved a high degree of proficiency in Sanskrit, Gujarati, Bengali, Magadhi and several other languages:

* * *

During his travel, once while he was resting for the night in a south Indian temple, a Tantrik woman approached him. In her insane desire to attain 'Tantra Sadhna', and to propitiate her goddess, she had already sacrificed her husband and son. Now as her final sacrifice in order to become a 'Tantrik', she saw in the person of Gurudev, a 'Poorna Purusha' fit for her sacrifice before the 'Tantra' Goddess.

As a prelude to the sacrifice, she tied a silken thread around Gurudev's feet. But before she could proceed, Maharajshri appeared in Gurudev's dream and said "Wake up, untie the thread from around your feet".

Gurudev obeyed and out of curiosity, he tied it to a buffalo's feet. With a piercing scream buffalo died. Gurudev's tender heart was shaken. He thought he was responsible for animal's death.

But Maharajshri later consoled him thus "In any case that day was the last day in that animal's life". "However on your uttering 'Ram Nam' at his death, it became cause for his 'Mukti'

Now Gurudev was consoled also grateful that his mentor 'Maharajshri' was protecting him at every step.

On completion of his travels, Gurudev returned once again to Maharajshri in Kashmir.

After some time 'Maharajshri' told Gurudev "To see the better side of *Tantra Vidya*, you better go to Tibet and stay there for some time and after your experience with the Lamas you may return to me."

He cautioned "The Lamas may tempt you with their '*Tantra Siddhis*' but you stick to your own '*Ishta Deva*'. The devi's idol over there is so miraculous that on her Darshan everyone seems to persive in her the idol to which he or she is devoted.

The Tibetan Lamas welcomed him warmly and showed him ancient literature on '*Tantra Shastra*' and told him to study it. By way of

demonstration of their *Tantrik* powers, the Lamas started playing on the *Tabla* and the atmosphere in the Devi temple changed from joy to sorrow and all the people started sobbing with tearful eyes.

After a while the Lamas altered and regulated their rhythm on the *Tabla* so that all those who were in tears stopped sobbing and started dancing with ecstasy and joy. They started laughing without any apparent cause, as soon as the Lamas stopped playing *Tablas*, everything returned to normal.

Observing all this Gurudev politely declined to waste his time on learning such petty tricks, and once again returned to Kashmir to be near to his mentor Maharajshri. He now devoted all his time and energy to practice Yog-Sadhna.

As the Geeta says:-

"Be a Yogi and thou shalt surely attain me"

* * *

Pavan Putra Shri Hanumanji**Chapter – 3**

We do not have sufficient authentic data on the duration of Gurudev's stay with Maharajshri.

The next time that we hear about him is that around 1900 A.D. he was well -known as a Virakta Mahatma at Atri Ansooyaji, about 10 miles from Chitrakoot.

The stone enclave on the banks of river Mandakini, with the idol of Shri Hanumanji by its side bears witness to his years of Sadhana over there.

In those days, there was a dense forest all around, which was impenetrable even by sunlight. Saints and Mahatmas did their tapasya all around in solitude in the forest.

Along with his routine of tapasya now Gurudev began 'Sadhu-Seva' (providing food for the Sadhaks)

For meeting the expenses, some unknown devotee used Rs 60/- every month to Sitapur Post Office. In those days, when gold prices were hardly Rs 10/per 10 gram .Rs 60 was equal to more than Rs 25000/- of present days)

Shri Rambahoriji Maharaj who is nearing his century mark now, was then a kid of 10 to 12 years and would go to Gurudev for food and out of curiosity. On maturity, his devotion increased and he decided to devote his entire life to Gurudev and his mission.

Rambahoriji had heard from others that before coming to Ansooyaji, Gurudev had stayed for several years in Pampasarji, situated between Kotitirtha and Devangana, and over there he used to be known as 'Tyagi Maharaj' and used to have a jata on his head.

In Pampasarji Gurudev had ceremoniously installed an idol of Shri Hanumanji, which is worshiped even today as 'Banke Siddha-Hanumanji,. After 12 long years of Tapasya of Pampasarji, Gurudev had come to Aansooyaji.

* * *

One evening during his walk, Gurudev sat for a while on a Nalla. Out of the dim and dusky forest a tiger came to drink water at the stream. Gurudev had often heard that if one was fearless and had sense of compassion and kindness of all, then even the wildest of wild animals would not harm him. He looked lovingly at the tiger who came over and sat at his feet. Poojyashri said "Welcome friend, I was feeling lonely, now that you are here we will have each other's company."

In the morning, Gurudev walked over to his cave and the Tiger went to the deep forest. This was only one example of several such incidents in his life when the most ferocious creatures were won over by his love and compassion for all.

When we burn as 'Agarbatti', its pleasant scent spreads all around. Similarly the very presence of saints and the aura of sanctity around them is enough to purify the thought process of all around them. In contrast, the disturbed people, with their ugly thoughts can and do pollute their surroundings and the thought of others.

On Ekadashi day, Gurudev used to do parikrama of Kamadgiri, the hill on which Shri Ram stayed with Jankiji, Laxmanji for a while during his forest sojourn of 14 years before going to *Panch-Vati*.

One night shri Hanumanji appeared in Gurudev's dream and told him to go and dig on the west side of Kamadgiri, where he would find an idol of Hanumanji, this idol was to be placed in a temple with due ceremony.

Next day when he went with Govardhandasji to the indicated spot, it was as though the idol sprang out from the ground with a blasting explosion.

As directed in the dream, he installed the idol ceremoniously in a temple and he would regularly recite '*Hanuman Bahuk*' before it, till he remained in that place.

Being pleased by such constancy and devotion Hanumanji gave him '*Sakshat Darshan*'. At this Gurudev's ecstasy knew no bounds, he went into a devotional trance and kept on uttering only one phrase, "Bring the bell, I want to perform *Aarti*". With great difficulty and after prolonged

prayers by all mahatmas, they were able to bring him out of that trance, 'Bhav Samadhi'.

Even today this sevine idol is reputed to possess miraculous power to fulfill all the wishes to those who worship it with true devotion.

After this incident, all the sadhus in the area recognizing Gurudev's saintly qualities started revering him, but one sadhu of Ansooyaji was jealous and constantly tried to oust Gurudev from that place. How ironical? Jealousy in An-Asooya(Non jealousy)

Having recognized such antagonism and to avoid friction Gurudev decided to leave the place. The pretext to leave arose very soon. One night the notorious dacoit Mangalsingh came to Gurudev's cave and asked for food because his entire gang was hungry. Gurudev merely pointed a finger at his cave and on finding food provisions, the dacoits could eat heartily after several days of near starvations.

After some days, an unknown and anonymous consignment of rice, Ghee, dal and potatoes reached Gurudev, who realized that the dacoits were repaying their debt of gratitude.

Further realization that in future, Mangalsingh may use him as a shield to escape from police, he moved away to the deep forest on the bank of Juri river. He constructed a kutir for sadhana and simultaneously began 'Sadhu- Seva'(service of Mahatmas)

He would provide nutritive food for them, while he himself subsisted on extremely frugal diet of few berries and at times juice of some leave. All around the local people called him "Phalahari Ranchhoddasji"(fruit eating saint)

A rogue Elephant belonging to the Jagirdar of Juri was allowed to roam freely causing damage to persons and property. Once he uprooted Gurudev's kutia.

Poojyashri boldly admonished the Jagirdar about his duties towards his people and told him to keep his elephant in restraint.

The Jagirdar was impressed by such true and bold words and regretted his elephant's misbehavior and sent artisans to restore Gurudev's kutia. That kutia and the mango tree planted by Gurudev by its side, bear testimony to his sadhana days.

* * *

During his sadhana of self realization, Gurudev would get so deeply engrossed in Samadhi that he would be totally immune to his surroundings. Passersby would bow down with reverence before this 'Dhyan-Lin' mahatma. The great sage Patanjali has prescribed eight stages in 'Yog-Sadhana'. 1. Yam (self control) 2. Neeyam (Regular Practice) 3. Asana (posture) 4. Pranayama (Breath control) 5. Pratyahar (Immunity to extraneous thoughts) 6. Dharna (Concentration) 7. Dhyan (Meditation) and 8. Samadhi (Stage of complete equanimity and bliss).

Gurudev, having achieved and transcended beyond all these eight stages, has reached '*Sahaja Samadhi*' or inborn and effortless unity with the supreme *Brahman*.

As the scent of flowers spreads far and wide, so did Gurudev's repute spread among people. Saints and Mahatmas came for his Darshan.

Simultaneously the common folk looked up to him with devotion and adoration. They would travel across long distances and come to him for solace, Darshan and blessings.

Indeed;-

*"As faith begets faith,
so Love begets love."*

* * *

Stay in Chitrakoot**Chapter -4**

Shri Valmikiji had suggested to shri Ram to stay in Chitrakoot for the first stage of his forest sojourn.

Among the saints who visited Gurudev, there was one Bodhramdasji, Mahant of Chitrakoot. It is belived that if one stayed here for 6 months on a diet of fruits alone and did Mantra Jap of 1,25,000 Ram-Nam, then all his wishes would get fulfilled. Therefore the place has become a Tapo-bhoomi for mahatmas and common man alike.

As Mahant of Janki kund Bodhramdasji was engaged in 'Sadhu-Seva'. He used to canvas from house to house to collect food grains for the Sadhus. This system was known as '*Kam-Dhenu*'

People in Chitrakoot and adjacent villages would set aside sackful of grains for Bodhramdasji's 'Sadhu-Seva'. Thus the noble work processed uninterrupted from year to year.

Whenever Gurudev came to Chitrakoot to collect his monthly money order, he would make it a point to meet Bodhramdasji. Their admiration and reverence for each other was mutual.

Once when Gurudev was on such a routine visit, the Mahatmas of Janki kund approached him and said "Mahajshri our well has become totally dry, and even for one bucketful of water, we have to go all the way to river, please do something about it"

Gurudev smiled and on pretext of taking a closer look, he went down in the dry well and invoked (Lord 'Varuna') the rain God and later told the sadhus "fetch about 10 buckets of water from the river Mandakini and put them in the well, then everything will be alright". His instruction were obeyed immediately and miraculously, hitherto untapped new springs of water shot up from the well, and now the same is able to supply water perenially, all the year round. By his Mantrashakti, Gurudev did what modern science cannot achieve even today.

He explained the phenomena thus:-

“Between the universal ‘Brahman’ and the primal elements such as Air, light, earth, water and fire, there is no duality. It is this supreme power which makes it possible for Brahma to create, for Vishnu to nourish and for Rudra to destroy the universe. It pervades the universe as the 5 primal forces mentioned above and it can chose to favour any one on whom God has bestowed his divine grace.”

Devotees and Sadhaks can be classified in two categories.

1 Those of Earthly nature (Demonic)

2. Those with divine nature i.e. Yogis.

Science has just begun to tape a small fraction of this force to use it to accumulate wealth and power and to subjugate people, whereas the Yogis can manifest any of these primal forces, without a desire for personal gain merely for service of humanity in distress.

All know that 2 parts of hydrogen and 1 part of oxygen produces water, similarly ‘Siddhas’ like Gurudev can harness any one of these primal forces (in this case water from the well) by his “Mantrashakti”.

A misguided sadhak may use the ‘Vashikaran’ mantra to enslave others but a true Siddha will only use it to spread love and brotherhood among the mankind.

In science this knowledge is called discovery, while in yoga we call it as ‘Siddhi’

* * *

With the passage of time, Bodhramdasji realized that old age was drawing nearer: he sent for Gurudev and requested him to takeover the post of Mahanta in his ashram. Gurudev replied “I am not suited for such administrative duties, I do not believe in building but I do believe in bread for the needy and I also believe in continuing ‘Sadhu-Seva’ for the Mahatmas.

Another saint Ramsharandasji assured Gurudev that he would help him in the work of procuring food grains from the people.

On receiving this assurance, Poojyashri acceded to Bodhramdasji's request and shifted from Juri to Janki kund. Later, Bodhramdasji left mortal world with immensely lightened heart.

After completing all the rituals concerning the ex-Mahanta's demise, Gurudev took stock of the current situation. Things were in total dis-array. However he did find a note book containing a list of names of annual grain donors.

Naturally on such onerous burden being placed on his shoulders, his prayers to God were;-

*"O Lord! With thy help nothing is impossible,
but without it, nothing at all is possible."*

* * *

Help from neighbouring Villages

Chapter -5

About 80 miles from Chitrakoot lies Paparenda, and the Mukhia(Headman) of that village, used to send grains to Jankikund, but on demise of Bodhramdasji he thought that the Sadhu-Seva would discontinue and therefore he sent nothing.

When Gurudev approached him, he said "You have come too late, at least for this year, we have already sold all our grains, please come next year." Yet the villagers collected Rs 30/- (A princely sum equivalent to Rs 15000/- of today, since gold was about Rs.10/- per 10 gms.),and out of this Gurudev purchased grains for a few rupees. In Chitrakoot the volunteers asked "How can we continue Sadhu- Seva for the full year on such a meagre quantity?"

Gurudev replied "Don't worry, leave the rest to God ". As the supplies dwindled from day to day, as though by a miracle, a big sethia appeared with cartloads of Dal, Gram, Barley etc. The sethji met Gurudev and thus having donated such huge provisions, he quietly departed.

The Mahatmas took this as an act of divine grace on account of Gurudev's powers and then onwards their reverence towards him increased manifold.

* * *

Next year, amidst scorching noonday heat on Ram Navmi day, Gurudev started for Paparenda with bare feet, none dared to suggest the use of shoes or a vehicle.

At Paperenda the Mukhia and the villagers gave food grains generously. That year, Poojyashri could just scrape through Sadhu-Seva, as if on account of his supreme faith in God and the siddhis bestowed on him.

Next year he concluded that some permanent solution should be found whereby the Sadhu Seva may continue uninterrupted.

The Thakore of Paparenda was suffering from acute and terminal stage of asthma. He told Gurudev "If you save me from this life sapping

disease, I shall render appropriate service unto you." Gurudev gave him some churna and the Thakore recovered completely and thereafter he was grateful to Gurudev forever.

* * *

On learning of this miracle cure, the village folk flocked to him for his divine touch to cure all their illnesses. They also contributed grain generously for Sadhu-Seva.

While in Paparenda Gurudev used to give discourses on the Ramayana, and without mike his strong voice could be heard far and wide.

According to our scriptures out of 8.4 millions births in each cycle, we get this supreme human form only once. Among human saints are best and among saints Gurudev tops the list. Yet contrary to accepting services that would be due to him as saint from ordinary humans, he devoted himself to the service of humanity.

He practiced what the poet merely sang :-

*"He prayeth best, who loveth best,
All creatures great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all,"*

As Shri Rama became Vanwasi and Lord Krishna undertook menial duties as a cowherd and played the flute to please his devotees, thus instead of a Mahatma, Gurudev became 'Babaji' for the simple souls around there.

Despite his frail body, Gurudev would lift a sack full of grains weighing about 100 pounds. When people would tell him to take it easy, he would say with a smile "you may rest for a while but do as I say".

For that year, the villagers donated 40 sackfuls of grains for Sadhu-Seva. Gurudev left Paparenda after suggesting to the villagers to try out wheat plantation in some areas instead of only gram, which was their conventional major crop.

One Hanumansihji insisted on getting 'Diksha' (initiation as disciple) and Kanthi from Gurudev. At first he was refused but when he was insistent, Gurudev acceded to his request and admonished him thus:-

1. Never steal 2. Never desecrate another's property and above all 3. Chant Ram-Nam as much as possible.

Since he practiced what he preached, people respected and revered him and followed Gurudev's teachings.

Truly

*"The value of saint is far
above the value of rubies".*

* * *

Love of God**Chapter – 6**

For Sadhu-Seva grains collection, on the invitation of Shri Rambahoriji of Saraiya, Gurudev used to visit his village, which was about 18 miles from Chitrakoot.

In that village Saraiya there lived a devotee of Poojyashri, named Shyamsunderji, who was unhappy because all his children were still-born and thus he was without an issue.

Gurudev blessed him with a smile “Don’t worry, this time the child will surely live.”

From his devotees God expects only 3 things;-

1. Clear Conscience 2. Control over sense organs and 3. Unity with God (God consciousness), and if one follow these principles with Love, humility and devotion, God would assure that whatever such a devotee says would happen as surely as though God himself had promised it.

That is how Gurudev’s blessings to his devotee bore fruit, Shyamsunder’s next child was a healthy son. In another case when similar result was obtained, Gurudev told the joyous parents to perform his Chuda-Karma ritual at Chitrakoot.

The mother named the boy as ‘Maharaj Dinh’ in fond memory of Gurudev. Gradually the entire Brahmin community of Saraiya became devout followers of Gurudev.

Whenever Poojyashri visited Saraiya, he would go to Shyamsunderji’s house and say “come on, I am very hungry get me some gram flour”, and then he would cook Roti out of same and eat it with apparent relish and contentment.

In reality this was a mere ruse to save his host from embarresment for not having wheat flour, because at that time wheat was not a common crop over there whereas Gurudev normally ate only wheat Tikkad.

By such tact, Gurudev assured that his host was neither embarrassed nor inconvenienced. This endeared him to all.

* * *

On listening to his discourses, the village folk all around there, started chanting Ram-Nam with ecstasy and did regular *Japa* of same and also discarded their vices and addictions.

Around those villages, even today, people have such faith in Gurudev that it is their firm belief that merely remembering him, whom they called 'Bade Sarkar' (Big master), even once was enough to accomplish the fulfillments of all their wishes.

Truly it is said :-

*"Faith is the substance of things hoped for,
and evidence of things not seen"*

* * *

Gurudev's Humility

Chapter-7

Even today, many people bear witness to the fact that their request, merely by locating hitherto undetected and untapped springs, Gurudev made the formerly dried up wells perennially flowing with water.

His benevolence towards his devotees made it possible for them to introduce new crops like wheat and enhanced food production and made people prosperous with over flowing granaries. Naturally they could donate more and more towards Sadhu-Seva.

Janki kund lacked pucca storage space so the village folk helped in constructing such godowns with bricks and lime or cement. Bearing testimony to their simple minded devotion and efforts, such structures can be seen even today. Impressed by Gurudev's simple life style and divine works, the villagers started worshipping him as a 'Devta' (Divinity). When people would come for Darshan and would offer him high denomination notes as donation, Gurudev used to say "I don't want so much money from you, your hard earned one rupee is equivalent to thousand donated by the rich and affluent classes."

Truly the saintly heart could not be won by monetary consideration but only by true devotion and reverence for the right way of life.

He did not covet titles such as 'Malik' or 'Mahant', he entrusted the post of Mahant to Ramsharandasji, in turn the people called him with adoration as "Bade Sarkar" (The great master).

Truly it has been said :-

*The one who abhors and shuns power, rules over
the head and heart of people like an uncrowned king"*

* * *

**“Those who live by the sword,
shall die by their own sword”**

Chapter -8

Before Gurudev came to Jankikund, there used to be a cult of ‘Rasik Samaj’ over there. This cult propagated “Shrinagar Ras” within “Ram – Bhakt” which was akin to ‘Raas-Lila’ of Shri Krishna. Gurudev opposed them, saying “Shri Ram was Maryada Purushottam, he had taken the vow of monogamy and for him all women other than Shri Jankiji were like Mata Kaushalya”.

As could be expected, the Rasik Samaj reacted violently, they murdered one of Gurudev’s supporters Mahatma Bodhramdasji and another Ganeshdasji was severely beaten up.

Gurudev was unmoved by their violent reaction and kept on preaching that devotees of Shri Ram must lead a simple and unassuming life and in Ram-Bhakti there was no place for libertine behavior. Finally the Rasik – Samaj lost its hold on Janki-Kund and left the place in total dis-array. Now the simple Mahatmas were left in peace and tranquility to pursue their sadhana.

On being driven out thus, the Rasik Samaj was planning their revenge. They succeeded in creating defection at JankiKund by luring away one Ramavatarji and the Jagirdar of Navagam to their side.

However Gurudev listened to their tirades with total disinterest and equanimity. Once losing his sainity Ramavtarji shouted at Gurudev -
“I will kill you and throw you away”.

Gurudev replied calmly "Brother! All of us are mortal, those who are born are destined to die and I am no exception: but if you try to kill me, you yourself will die." These prophetic words shortly came to be true. While gurudev decided to move away to avoid friction and went to stay at Hastam, at the Kund Ramavatariji died. Similar to the puranic tale of Prahlad and his father Hiranyakashyap, an aggressor who tries to kill a devotee of God, gets killed himself. This was concrete demonstration and repletion of that tale.

In the kingdom of God, in the long run, only truth prevails, though in the short span it may appear as though falsity may succeed..

Indeed as :-

*"Love begets love,
violence begets violence"*

* * *

Goodness in return of evil

Chapter-9

The Jagirdar who had joined Ramavatarji in abusing Gurudev was punished by God by terminating his family lineage. All babies in his family were still born. Realizing his mistake he went to Gurudev with tearful eyes and asked for his forgiveness.

Like the divine saint that he was, Gurudev forgave him and agreed to return to Jankikund. Then the Jagirdar received the auspicious news about the birth of a healthy son and he at once realized that this good fortune was a result of Gurudev's forgiveness and his blessings.

Gurudev took special care to see that neither the rich nor the poor should feel neglected among his disciples. He knew that certain rich man gave donation to get name and fame and even material benefits but the humble villagers did so out of sheer love and devotion. So as to make the common people feel that they were in no way inferior to the rich, he made all around him feel that he belonged to all without any distinction whatsoever.

The Jagirdar described above, lacked nothing except children to continue his family line: as Gurudev blessed him with a son, he was equally benevolent towards the poor who lacked children.

The rich who were thus blessed with off springs came forward with humility and devotion to donate generously for works of social welfare, being conducted under Gurudev's guidance. Some of them donated anonymously and a separate list of such donors was maintained.

Gurudev's way of achieving rapport with common people like Shyamsunderji and others made him revered and earned him more and

more devotion from people. In certain respect this was similar to what shri Ram did when he befriended Kewat and went to the ashram of Shabari and gave them his blessings.

Simultaneously he also gave his blessings to the royal class represented by king Manu and queen Shatrupa.

Perhaps one can gauge the depth of an ocean but one can never measure the extent of shri Guudev's benevolence and love of mankind, alike for the humble and the rich, the meek and downtrodden as well as those as in high positions.

* * *

Sainthood in action

Chapter – 10

Once shri Paramanand Sharanji bought a saintly and brilliant child to the kund. He was rather talkative. This child was drawn towards Gurudev at first sight and wished to leave his former mentor and out of irresistible attraction he wished to stay under Gurudev.

Poojyashri noting his extra talkativeness, gently suggested to the child "If you observe 'Moun' for a few days, you will be able to control your faculty of speech and put it to much better use."

Obeying these orders, the child observed 'Moun' for a very long period of time without a break, then people started calling him 'Mouni Baba' (silent saint).

Gurudev was also favourably inclined towards him and considering him worthy to undertake 'sadhana', he formally initiated him and also taught him some yogic kriyas. On his part the child did achieve some degree of proficiency but failed to attain the high standards of sadhana set up by Poojyashri.

Later another saint, Sitaramdasji joined Gurudev and he too was taught Yoga-sadhana; but the Chitrakoot climate did not suit his disposition. He had severe rashes on his body and Gurudev ordered him to carry on with his sadhana in colder climates like the Himalayas.

After the initiation of Mouniji, Gurudev felt himself relatively free from administrative work, which was taken over by Ramsharandasji and Mouniji.

Now having been free from the mundane routine, with a view to widen the sphere of his social welfare activities, he decided to go on a journey to other provinces.

Like the holy and divine river Ganges which having left the shri-charan of lord Vishnu, descended on the head of lord Shiva and then on the Himalaya and later, to spread her bounty among us, flowed through the dusty planes of India to invigorate not only our crops but also our spirits.

Similarly Gurudev, having achieved self realization, left the solitude of Ansuyaji, Juri, Chitrakoot and like a mobile place of pilgrimage, started on his onward journey or the welfare of mankind.

Naturally his mission was two fold :

1. Maximizing works of public good and 2 Propagating the worship of Lord Ram.

With meagre possessions of one Kamandalu, one shawl and two langotis; and with a view to avoiding the need to ask for direction he started along the rail tracks. He walked so briskly that none could keep pace with him. Obviously the saint was in a hurry to accomplish his mission.

At night he would rest on the ground in the open, with his elbow as pillow and drape the shawl around his body to protect it from vagaries of weather. Wandering thus on foot for several days, he reached Kutchh and Saurashtra.

As we shall see :-

"The gushing waters that we see were initially tiny droplets, then turned to a trickle, then to stream and rivulets, which converged to become the mighty Amazon, Brahmaputra or the holy Ganges."

* * *

The good fortune of Saurashtra

Chapter – 11

Gurudev first reached at a village Kumharia near the city of Anjar in Kutchh, and went to Kumharia Hanuman Mandir. The Mahant, shri Ramcharandasji accorded him a hearty welcome.

Gurudev stayed there for a while and with the help of Mahantji performed an 'Anushthan' of shri Hanumanji and then went over to Anjar.

In that city there was a devout person, shri Rajnarayanji who rendered services to saints and he welcomed Gurudev to his house.

Though he stayed with the shethji, he would camp in the garden and despite the fact that the whole family was willing to be at his services. Poojyashri was interested only in giving discourses and nothing more. He never interfered with their personal affairs, nor would he accept anything from them.

After completing his sadhan-bhajan, Gurudev would have the 'Falahar' of fruits, ground nuts or boiled potatoes in very small portions. He would do all his work such as washing clothes and cleaning utensils himself. His serene simplicity and self reliance so impressed Ramnarayanji that on the last day of Gurudev's stay, he assembled his entire family and insisted on performing his 'Aarti' and addressed him as 'Devta' (Divinity).

From Anjar, Gurudev went on to his further journey to surrounding towns and villages such as Morbi and other places and propagated "Ram-Kirtan" and devotion unto Lord Ram.

He used to tell them :-

"In this Kali-Yug, man has fallen from spiritual planes due to greed and lethargy and for his uplift and well being the only and sure fire remedy is Ram-Nam." After his visit to several villages and preaching along the way Gurudev reached KotdaNayani. Over there some devotees, who had come for Darshan, invited him to visit Rajkot and he agreed.

When finally he reached Rajkot, he stayed on the banks of river Aaji. Having fulfilled his promise to give Darshan to devotees like Jethabhai, Shamjibhai and Kalyanjibhai, he proceed onwards his journey to propagate 'Ram-Bhakti' and works of 'Lok-Kalyan' (social welfare).

For:-

"This naughty world owes its existence to, Justice of the strong, the charity of the rich, the wisdom of the learned and above all to the prayers of the poor"

* * *

Love Conquers all**Chapter – 12**

About 70 years ago, in the village called Anantpur in M.P. there was a gentleman named Kundanlalji. His wife's brother had left home and was rumoured to have become a sanyasi. Kundanlalji's wife Avanti bai was sad for her brother.

When he heard that a Mahatma was doing Tapasya in a nearby forest and was not well, believing him to be her lost brother, she went there along with her husband. She found the Mahatma (our Gurudev) sitting serenely under a tree. Though she at once realized that this was not her brother yet she was sad at the thought that, wherever he may be, her brother too must be enduring such hardships to lead the life of sanyasi.

Reading her thoughts Gurudev said "Sister! You can treat me as your lost brother" at these enduring words, her sorrow was forgotten and she requested Gurudev to visit her home.

The saint replied with a sweet smile, "Thank-you so much, at the moment I am quite comfortable, where I am, but I will certainly visit you one day". Next, Gurudev, during his travels, happened to meet Avantibai's mother Sunderbai, and he consoled her thus "Ma! Please feel free to treat me as your own son." He further acceded to her request that as a part of the sacred duties of a son, he would attend her last rites on her death.

Believing this relationship to be true and sanctified, all the children of Avantibai used to call Gurudev as Mamaji (Maternal uncle).

Once while in Anantpur Gurudev had gone to the adjacent deep forest and he saw a ferocious Tiger advancing towards him; he faced the beast fearlessly and ordered him to turn around and leave Anantpur. He then told Kundanlalji, 'Kakkaji' to go and have a look at the Tiger if he wished. Kakkaji was scared of wild animals, he declined but requested Gurudev to teach him 'Mantra' which would have the power to tame all ferocious creatures. Poojyashri admonished him in solemn tone. "Forget about it, such siddhis cannot be entrusted to worldly people. For sadhus like us there is no difference between a pet dog and a tiger."

Truly it is said :-

"Unto the pure all things are pure."

* * *

Ram Bhakti spreads in Saurashtra

Chapter -13

Once Gurudev was camping in Ramnik Aashram on the river bank near Rajkot. Waghjibhai, a social worker and devotee of Gurudev came over to him on hearing this news, and brought Gurudev to the ashram that he conducted for benefits of saints. (this was called Waghji Ashram then)

Poojyashri's daily sadhana routine lasted for 3 hours in the morning and evening. After completing this sadhana Gurudev made the devotees happy and kept them busy with his learned discourses on the Ramayan, which he delivered with simple lucidity in his own inimitable manner.

With his side, deep, scholarly and exhaustive studies and the way he delivered his discourses the people became ecstatic with joy and unmindful to the passage of time. Prior to this time, so far as Saurashtra was concerned, the extent and efforts made on propagation of Ram Bhakti were negligible. Only a few sadhus had delivered such public discourses on the Ramayana.

At that time Gurudev followed the rule of not staying for more than 2 days at any one spot so on the third day he left for Manekwada. There he met several Jagirdars and Darbars and at their insistence he initiated them as his disciples.

With simple yet hard hitting discourses denouncing all evil ways, he was able to make his listeners to give up their bad habits and addictions. People noticed yet another strange characteristic in him. While they sat around him waiting patiently for their turn to seek solution to their knotty problems, without even speaking with Gurudev the solution would occur to them, as though by telepathy.

The magnetic personality of Gurudev made all who met him feel serenity and joy and of being nearer to God, some experienced a state of sustained ecstasy.

Like the fragrance of roses, his saintly personality made his name and fame spread far and wide in Saurashtra, and Chanting of Ram—

Nam and reading and listening to Ram Katha became more and more popular in towns and villages alike.

In order to make the Ramayana more popular, Gurudev devised a novel method, that of conducting 'Antakshari', wherein the basic condition for the participants was that only couplets from Ramayana could be recited. With the growing popularity of this programme some enthusiastic people learnt the whole of Ramayana by heart and they could recite any couplet from that sacred book.

Once the wellknown Ramayankar Binduji came to Rajkot, and he remarked about Gurudev "if any one knew the art of becoming Narayan from Nar, it was shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj, who has propagated Ramayana among the common people to the maximum possible extent."

* * *

Relaxation in Rules to please the devotees

Chapter – 14

Whenever Gurudev came to Saurashtra, he would meet the Darbar of Bhadwa, who was among his favourites. Once Dinubhai came from Gondal to have Darshan at Bhadwa. He requested Poojyashri to come to Gondal and for the journey he had brought along a car.

When the delegation of devotees from Gondal asked the Bhadwa Darbar about Gurudev's food preferences and other routine needs, the Darbar replied with a smile "His diet is frugal and his needs are meagre, because he does all his work including cooking himself, therefore you have no need to worry about him."

Next day he politely declined the use of a car and Gurudev started on foot (on bare feet) for Gondal in his own inimitable style. Seeing his Guru walking thus, the Darbar of Bhadwa also walked with bare feet upto the village boundary to see him off.

In Gondal, Poojyashri stayed in one of the rooms in Akshar Mandir. One devotee shri Haribhai was so much impressed by his saintly nature that he took formal Diksha with his whole family.

One Ravishankarbhai who has already initiated in Pushtimarg but did not feel comfortable about it, asked Gurudev whether he could be given Diksha once again?

Gurudev said, "Why not, let alone Pushtimargis, I have even initiated the 'Yavanas' however, while giving him the 'Diksha' Gurudev gave him the "Krishna-Mantra" so as to suit his former natural inclination.

After all both "Shri Krishna" and "Shri Ram" are same. The incarnations of Shri Vishnu. Gurudev did not believe in narrow compartments of caste, creed or cult. According to him humanism was of prime importance. His mission in life was to make more and more human and compassionate. He used to say "The Goal (God realization) of all religions is one and the same, though paths towards the goal may be diverse and numerous.

With a view to ensure that Gurudev could stay at one permanent place and to his Sadhana in solitude and tranquility, one of the devotees, shri Ravishankarbhai had purchased a plot of land but he became sad when he learnt that it was near the railway line and the passing trains would disturb Gurudev's Samadhi. When Poojyashri heard of this he asked "what is your idea of 'Samadhi' when a true sadhak reaches that stage, he attains the supreme state of being one with the Brahman (The Supreme being) unmoved by and totally immune to all outer happenings."

The Darbar of Bhadwa was upset that while he slept on soft beds his Gurudev sleep on hard ground. To ease his mind he got prepared a simple quilt and a pillow for Gurudev's use on his next visit to his place. At his adoring insistence, and merely with a view so as not to make him unhappy, Gurudev acceded to this minor deviation from his Spartan rules.

When the other devotees came to know of this relaxation, they too insisted that he should accept minor comforts like shawl, chappal and a car for his journey instead of 'Pad-Yatra'. Gurudev merely said, "This body is yours keep it as you like."

These minor relaxations in his code, and use of articles of bodily comfort, to please his devotees, did not affect his 'Virakta' mind, which remained as detached as ever from bodily pleasures and pains.

Common people are like milk which gets affected by contact with water. Contrary to this the true saints are like 'Navnit' (butter), which having gone through mature transformation does not at all get affected by contact with water.

This as the scriptures say is the acid Test of a real Saint.

* * *

Sadguru's name shields from calamities

Chapter – 15

Dinubhai had gone to serve in Africa, with Gurudev's blessings. When he wished to return to India, the 2nd world war was raging with full ferocity. Failing to get regular berth in a steamer, he was obliged to travel by an Arab cargoship driven by sails. Relying on the Arab's estimation of wind speed, he wired his family in Gondal that he would reach home on the 12th day.

It was a convoy of 4 ships. On Dinubhai's ship there were 150 passengers. During their journey the entire convoy of ships caught up in a vicious cyclonic storm and the other 3 ships sank. Now fearing for his life Dinubhai started chanting Gurudev's name. As if by a miracle, the storm subsided, yet their difficulties were not yet over. Their ship was short of drinking water and the passenger, were sure to die of thirst.

Once again Dinubhai prayed to Gurudev for salvation, as if in answer to his prayers, suddenly a gentle cooling breeze began to blow assuaging their thirst to some extent. Then the wind took a reverse turn, and pushed the ship towards Aden.

Dinubhai thought, God's and Gurudev's ways are inexplicable, he uttered a silent prayer of thanks giving because he was convinced that it was Gurudev's benign intervention and blessings which had saved him twice from sure death. It was immaterial that he landed at the port of Aden and not Okha.

After 3 days, ship re-embarked on its journey to India.

In the interim period, when Dinubhai failed to reach home as scheduled, his family was extremely worried. The grief stricken parents left Gondal for Rajkot to seek solace from Gurudev who was camping in Waghji Ashram. When they met Poojyashri, they said with tearful eyes, "Bapu! 22 days have passed without any news from Dinu". Gurudev

told Dinubhai's mother in compassionate voice, "Ma! Do not worry, your Dinu is safe and will land at Okha tomorrow evening."

This prediction proved true, and after landing Dinubhai went straight to Rajkot for Darshan. Before Dinubhai could utter a single word Gurudev said "Welcome Dinu, you had to undergo lot of hardships and bear the agony of thirst and reached Aden instead of Okha, am I right?"

Speechless at Gurudev's omniscience, Dinubhai prostrated himself in grateful pranam.

No wonder shri Shankaracharyaji has said in Maniratnam;-

"If one wishes to cross over his vast and fearful ocean of existence, he must surrender himself unto the feet of his Gurudev, which alone can procure his salvation."

Thus it is no wonder that Dinubhai's chanting of Gurudev's name and surrendering himself at his feet saved his life. After all our worldly ocean is far easier to cross over than 'Bhav-Sagar' as mentioned above by shri Sankara.

* * *

Benign influence of saint

Chapter – 16

As ordinary teak, if stored for sometime with sandalwood, acquires fragrance, similarly 'satsangh' (virtuous company) can reform even the evil and addicted persons.

Kanubhai Kotecha had fallen in bad company with all evil addictions, his uncle brought him to Gurudev and he requested Gurudev to give him 'Kanthi' (Formal initiations) so that he would renounce his addictions and the uncle could have some peace in mind. Gurudev agreed and after tying the Kanthi he looked at Kanubhai with piercing eyes and said "within 3 monts you must stop smoking, this will be my Gurudakshina."

Thus Gurudev could detect Kanubhai's addiction, which was not known even to his uncle, within a few seconds of meeting him. With his penetrating gaze he could glean vices as well as virtues. He had such a powerful memory that he never forgot a person and would know all about him, if such a person came even once for Darshan and performed pranam.

He could describe events of the past and future very vividly as if they were happening now in the present right in the front of his eyes. Such yogis posses 'Trikal Darshi' powers, that of knowing the past, the present and the future.

Thus moved by Gurudev's omniscience, Kanubhai thought that 3 month's time was too long and surrendered his packets of Beedis and match box at Gurudev's feet right then and there. Later, it was the turn of his second vice, gambling. Gurudev told him "Kanu, you may continue to speculate in features but do it openly not by stealth. If anyone asks you tell him 'My Gurudev's orders'. He further added for his benefit "But remember this— In God's kingdom retribution may be delayed but it will surely come one day."

So far we have not heard of any Guru openly ordering his disciple to gamble but in this case perhaps as events later proved 'set a thief to

catch a thief' was the maxim used by Gurudev. Finally, this produced desired result.

Now Kanubhai openly played features. At times, while he was sitting at home for dinner, news would be received "Police have raided our Adda and arrested several employees". Now Gurudev's prophetic words about god's punishment kept on repeating themselves in Kanubhai's mind.

On deep introspection he realized that it was sheerly by virtue of Guru-Kripa that he was saved from police net, because so far he was always away when the raids occurred.

He resolved to give up this dangerous and evil habit and at the very spot where he speculated in features, he started the reputed business of 'Sadhana Lodge' and devoted himself whole heartily to works of social welfare.

After Kanubhai's example, none can deny Gurudev's reformatory powers of transforming vice—infested persons into God fearing citizens.

"Like the touch stone (Parasmani) transforming base metal to pure Gold, the saint doth reform the former evil doers."

* * *

Founding of Shri Sadguru Sadan

Chapter - 17

Prabhudasbhai Poojara, had his business in Karachi, and had opened a branch in Calcutta whereby he prospered further. While on a visit to Rajkot he heard about Gurudev's saintly nature and went to "Waghji Ashram" for Darshan.

Gurudev asked him straight away "When did you leave Calcutta?" Being astonished by such clairvoyance, he immediately became a devout follower and offered generous help in building a larger ashram premises, which was essential to accommodate saints who had started visiting in greater numbers.

* * *

The devotees insisted for Gurudev's presence at the time of inauguration, he came as requested and wished to start the ashram with a "Ram-Yagna". The weather indicated rains and interruption in the Yagna. Devotees pointed at the gathering dark clouds and expressed their fears. Gurudev started at the sky and said "Do your job and depart." As if in obedience, after a slight drizzle the skies cleared and the yagna was completed as per schedule.

There was acute water shortage in the Ashram, the well was dry and they had to rely entirely on the tiny stream at the back of the Ashram. Poojyashri gazed at the stream and said "stay still the task is completed." During nine days of the yagna, thousands of sadhus and the needy had their food and water, yet that meagre stream was able to supply their requirement of water.

The founding day of the ashram and Gurudev's Birthday as well poonyatithi are celebrated over there and the ashram is known as "Shri Ranchhoddasji's Ashram" and provides 'Sadhu-seva' all the year round. Truly :-

*"The saints love God's creation,
more than the creator himself."*

* * *

Reformation of people

Chapter - 18

Sanjeevbhai (name changed) a Rajkot advocate was a gambling addict. His obsession obliged him to rise in court at 5-00 p.m. sharp and tell the judge "Please adjourn my case next day. I must go now." The judge knowing his weakness, indulged him.

He would go straight to gymkhana and begin with billiard or tennis but by 9-00 p.m. as if drawn by a magnet he would reach the gambling table and start gambling. Fate had made him a perennial loser, when at last he was facing complete financial ruin, God provided a means for his salvation. On one Sunday, when the court was closed, Sanjeev happened to pass by Gurudev's ashram along with a friend. He decided to pay a brief visit. While he was there, Gurudev was also present and was giving his discourse to devotees.

Prior to having Gurudev's Darshan, they washed up at the well and set at the back of the crowd waiting for completion of the *pravachan*. No sooner they sat down, as if on a cue, Gurudev started preaching against the evils of gambling and said "Gambling not only ruins the addict, it also ruins his family and the same is true about wine". At these words Sanjeev felt extreme embarrassment and felt that the preaching was addressed to him because Gurudev had read his mind.

He thought "He surely must be a 'siddha' who can read my mind". Gurudev proceeded further and talked about leather goods, he said "Leather is an impure substance and pollutes the body particles of the user of leather goods; in contrast those refraining from use of leather would be more healthy due to purity of their body particles..". Sanjeev, who listened with rapt attention, realized that the head bend of his cap was of leather and soon as got out, he discarded his cap. Strangely, though he had been in the ashram since 1.00 p.m. and it was 5.00 p.m. now, yet his daily urge to rush to the gymkhana did not arise.

He kept roaming around the ashram thinking about the discourse. When Gurudev passed by with his Kamandlu, he prostrated himself before him and said "Bapu! Your preaching has been of immense benefit to me". Gurudev smiled sweetly and after placing his loving hand on Sanjeev's head he proceeded onwards.

His companion was agitated by this sudden change in Sanjeev, he asked "Are you asleep, don't you realize that it is time for our gymkhana games?" to this Sanjeev replied "No dear friend, now I am fully awake, till today I was in a sleepy trance, now I will bid goodbye to card games forever."

He kept his word and never indulged in his old vice. On hearing that Bapu did not like western attire and called the necktie as 'Nak-Katai' (nose cutter), he adopted the national dress. Now he passes his nights in the ashram and the hands that held the cards now play the pious tunes of "Shri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram" on the harmonium.

Truly,

*if one surrender at the feet of shri Gurudev with true faith,
such a one surely receives salvation.*

* * *

Saintly blessings can work wonders.**Chapter- 19**

Jayaben was married to Champakbhai Oza at a very young age. She was sad on account of her chronic illness. In those days when a rupee had 50 times purchasing power compared to present day, they were obliged to spend about Rs 300/- per month on her treatment and had to manage their expenses from what remained balance.

Around 1946, despite spending huge sums on medical care for years, Jayaben got pleurisy and the left lung became completely non-functional. She had cold, cough, high fever and was confined to bed on doctor's orders.

* * *

During those days Gurudev was in Rajkot and Jayaben's husband Champakbhai came regularly to listen to his discourses. He always sat at the end of the gathered devotees and would listen faithfully.

One day, due to worries about his wife's health, his attention was constantly wandering and during the discourse he kept on glancing at his watch, because the doctor was to come at 4-00 p.m. for Jayaben's checkup. His sense of discretion told him that it would be disrespectful to leave before end of the discourse.

Suddenly Gurudev looked in his direction and said "Those whose minds are elsewhere may leave." Champakbhai was surprised by this knowledge of Gurudev about his mental state but taking advantage of the permission, he left quietly. At this, people all around started mumbling "What sort of an emergency could make a person leave in the midst of a pravarchan?"

Champakbhai's friend, who was present in the gathering, explained his dire predicament and about Jayaben's health.

Gurudev said with a smile, "I know everything, there is nothing wrong with her." These prophetic words proved to be a boon. When Champakbhai reached home in a hurry, the puzzled doctor was moving

his stethoscope over Jayaben's chest from one spot to another. He said she is not ill, I give her permission to move around the house."

Later, when he reexamined her after four days, the astonished doctor said "Either my thermometer is defective or the medical science is wrong, despite registering high fever, she is able to move around without any discomfort."

Gurudev's benevolent words "there is nothing wrong with her" did their work. Later Jayaben could walk to the doctor's clinic and he found her free from all disease.

Now after 25 years (at the time of publication of 1st Gujarati edition i.e 1973) she is healthy and hearty and there are no restrictions or medication in her life.

This is how simple and benign blessings of saints work their wonders.

* * *

Shri Ram Maha Yagna**Chapter-20**

After 6 months of founding of Sadguru Sadan in 1946, Poojarabhai approached Gurudev for getting his consent for performing a Maha-Yagna in Rajkot. Gurudev gave the consent but added "It is an excellent idea, but while feeding Aahutis in the yagna, simultaneously we must also feed the hungry humanity."

All agreed to this noble task and in preparation, provisions began to arrive. Saints from all over India were invited and shri Bhagwadacharya, a saint of Ramanuja sect had agreed to be present at the inaugural ceremony.

* * *

Some interested parties had spread a false rumor that ignoring local Pundits, Gurudev had invited pundits from Uttarakhand and Kashi. Believing this to be true, Prabhuramdasji, a learned shashtri of Rajkot left town and went to Bombay to escape such an insult to local talent.

When Gurudev returned to Rajkot and was informed about this development, he reverentially invited all the learned Brahmins and on hearing Prabhuramdasji, he sent a telegram to his Bombay address, inviting him and requesting him to be the chief priest at the Yagna ceremony. Prabhuramdasji responded magnanimously and returned and worked whole heartedly for the success of the Mahayagna. After all, the Yagna was in the interest of general public and for redistribution of boons and benefits among all.

Next day when devotees were heaping garlands on him, Gurudev said "Why do you waste money on these garlands, even one flower is enough". He continued "You do not seem to be listening to my teachings, use the savings from garlands to feed the hungry, that would be an act of humanism". He added, "Instead of adopting virtuous simplicity, you people are dragging sadhus like me in worldly involvements by gifting shawls, clothes and cars."

He illustrated his point by giving example of a student who is physically present in the class while teacher teaches, but since he has not listened carefully, he fails in the exam. He requested them not to be like the inattentive student.

About honours and insults being merely a state of mind he narrated his own experience. To avoid crowds at the station, once he had come to Rajkot without any prior intimation and it being 2-00 a.m. at night, instead of waking up the chowkidar, he entered the ashram from the back. On waking up, the chowkidar, who had never met him, ordered him out. Knowing that it was the chowkidar's ignorance that was speaking through him, he quietly went and slept under a tree.

The confused chowkidar searched for Gurudev's photo and recognizing his face brought him in with greatest reverence and asked for his forgiveness. Gurudev said, "If we think about the frame of mind of the opposite party we can avoid the anger due to insults and false pride on being praised by others."

* * *

As the appointed day drew closer, saints and the learned from all over started converging on Rajkot. The essence of learning came from Kashi, the saint samaj of Ayodhya and Mahatmas of Chitrakoot arrived. All were welcomed with due reverence and accommodated, if need be in comfortable tents and Raotis.

Each sect differed from others in mode of worship, and Tilak marks. Some were showy while others were simple to the point of asceticness. With his untiring zeal and humility, Poojyashri visited each tent and shone like the glorious moon among this constellation of saints, the most illustrious of them all.

There were separate arrangements for each 'Varna' (class) so far Rajkot had seen only his saintly qualities, now his organizational skills came to the fore.

An exclusive "sant-sabha" was called prior to the yagna. Addressing this august assembly Gurudev said "Our words would carry more weight in our preaching to the common man if our conduct matched our teachings."

The Brahmins of Kashi, who were specially invited for the yagna raised a scriptural objection. They contended that according to their knowledge there was no scriptural support for 'Brahman' nature of Shri Rama, who despite his greatness was only the prince of Ayodhya and therefore an yagna cannot be performed in his name.

Poojyashri having anticipated such controversy had got prepared by Bhagwadacharya of Ahmedabad a learned thesis, which gave scriptural proof about 'Brahman' nature of Shri Ram. It also laid down the yagna ritual. When the Kashi delegation read the scholarly thesis their criticism and opposition vanished.

Thus at last, the yagna started. It was formally inaugurated by former ruler of Rajkot Shri Pradyumansinhji and Shri Bhagwadacharya of Ahmedabad. It was conventional to start the yagna by producing fire by rubbing two pieces of Arniwood, while all other pundits failed to do so, Gurudev produced the ceremonial frictional fire at first attempt.

27 days were earmarked for the Yagna and daily about 50,000 devotees came for darshan on feet or by bullock carts.

Other religious programs organized during these days were:-

- (1) Rambahoriji gave discourses on Gita for the first 2 days.
- (2) Then for next 9 days, Avadhkishoreji gave discourses on Ramayana.
- (3) Next 7 days were devoted to Bhagwat Saptah.
- (4) For the last 4 days, Madhavlalbhai explained the essence of Ram-Charit Manas.

The Yagna was performed in the open between 8 to 12 noon and 3 to 6 in the afternoon. People who came for Yagna Darshan, derived benefit by listening to the discourses as mentioned earlier, and between 6 to 8 p.m. there would be Bhajans by well known devout singers. The scriptures decreed that yagna fire must be kept burning round the clock and a strict vigil was kept to ensure this.

Gurudev supervised everything with his boundless energy without rest or respite. Since the scriptures forbade the use of Baboolwood in yagna, he instructed the Havaniks accordingly. As instructed by Poojyashri the kitchens were kept open round the clock to serve food to the saints,

the learned as well as the poor and the needy without any distinction of caste, class or creed.

As rationing was then still in force the rationing dept. objected to the unauthorized use of food. Gurudev wrote to Gandhiji, who at once issued strict instructions of non-interference in such benign project of social welfare.

As for himself, Gurudev would only take simple Khichri and his usual wheat Tikkad.

* * *

During that time, once when Gurudev sat surrounded by devotees, an unknown sadhu came and started abusing Gurudev. He suffered in silence and after the sadhu's angry tirade was over, he asked him lovingly, "Brother ! did you have some food ?" when he replied "No" Gurudev told the devotees to procure the necessary meal for him.

This was his way of disarming false animosity. Once during scholarly discussions among the learned, one saint sought and obtained his permission to refute arguments set forth by another speaker. Everyone felt that now there would be conflagration of tempers. But surprisingly the occasion never arose. On the appointed day, the contender Mahtma remained absent on account of a splitting headache and the controversy subsided.

* * *

On the conclusion of yagna, the completion ceremony was duly celebrated and all the invites were given appropriate gifts i.e. Dakshina with a warm send off. All the participants and devotees were overawed by Gurudev's organizational skills, saintly temperament, scholarly disposition and his ability to reconcile the conflicting view points at one spot without causing a conflagration of tempers.

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Donations for the yagna were received in such generous measures that even after meeting all the expenses of the yagna lacs of rupees were found to be surplus. Poojyashri thought it fit to distribute the same among

the poor and needy but modest middle classes, who were shy in divulging their true condition and needs openly before outsiders and in public.

A volunteer core was told to move from house to house and collect data about true needs of each such family. On finalization of this list, these self respecting middle class families were gifted pro-rata amounts from the surplus fund. The money earmarked for each family was rucked in an envelope and slipped across their threshold anonymously after dark to avoid for them the public humiliation of living on charity.

Poojyashri admonished the rich to set aside their pride of possessions and act as trustees of public funds, appointed by God, who wished them to manage the wealth and distribute the same among the poor and the needy.

On completion of the 'purnahuti' formalities and disposition of surplus funds as described above, on account of his ceaseless toil and round the clock vigil of a month, Gurudev found his eyes heavy lidded with overdue sleep. The yagna project demonstrated Gurudev's total control over sense organs and brought to the fore, his unusual skills of organization and management.

Truly :-

*"They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength
They shall mount up with wings of eagle,
They shall run and not be weary,
and they shall walk and not be faint."*

* * *

The saint withdraws for sadhana

Chapter – 21

On completion of the yagna, Gurudev retired to a deep forest for rest, recuperation, solitude and sadhana, without informing anybody about his whereabouts. He took along with him, the 16 year old son of Avantibai, named Ramesh from Anantpur.

The boy could not receive proper education due to his indifferent health.

While they were in the forest, Gurudev would be sitting in one posture of 'Samadhi' for very long periods, occasionally he would open his eyes and throw water on the ground from his Kamandalu and flames would leap out. On seeing such strange sight, the simple soul Ramesh asked Gurudev what it was all about? He was told to mind his own business and not to gaze in Gurudev's direction during his sadhana.

Occasionally when he had sparetime, Gurudev tried to teach the boy, Sanskrit, simple arithmetic, and even a little English! The simple Ramesh could comprehend M-A-N means Man; C-A-T means Cat but when it came to W-H-A-T means what ? He was in utter confusion.

Gurudev lovingly asked him once "If your parents were to call you back, would you return or stay here with me?" Ramesh replied promptly "of course I will stay here with you only."

Poojyashri taught him cooking, driving and even how to conduct himself in case he was chosen as a Sarpanch ! (The village Head).

* * *

The Benevolent Protection of saint.**Chapter – 22**

The devotees were anxious due to total lack of news about his whereabouts and a delegation of Pragjibhai and six others set forth in search of Gurudev.

They first went to Chitrakoot, hoping that he would attend the Bhandara over there following demise of shri Ramsharandasji. They were disappointed when Poojyashri did not come and started for Anantpur. On the journey they lost their way in dense forest, and during the night the situation worsened when heavy rains began. Admist darkness, thunderclap and lightning, they were drenched to the skin. Shivering with cold, they managed to reach a village and the 'Mukhia' (Head man) welcomed them and offered hot milk and prepared a fire to warm their frozen bodies.

When they asked for Tea, the simple Mukhia could not understand what they wanted (Those were pre T.V. Commercial days when Tea had yet to reach the simple Villagers). The Mukhia informed them that it was impossible for them to reach Anantpur since the roads had become muddy due to rains. As a last resort, they surrendered themselves mentally unto Gurudev for salvation.

As if in answer to their prayers Ramesh came on the scene and said "Come along Gurudev is calling you, he is on the outskirts of this village." They embraced Ramesh with joyous ecstasy and went over to Poojyashri, and they found him in wet clothes sitting with serene face near a well. He asked them "Why are you following me, if I go to the Himalayas, will you still pursue me?"

After changing into dry clothes Gurudev returned to the village with them.

In the village, he prepared khichri for all and told them to eat the same since he knew that they were hungry. They informed him about the sad plight of Rajkot and said "Bapu ! so far there has been no rain" Bapu

replied "Don't worry, tomorrow at 11-00a.m. it will rain in Rajkot," and it did.

From that village, they went to Sironj and for 4 days Gurudev regaled them with his company.

The brothers from Rajkot requested that they may be formally initiated as his disciples, when Gurudev said "I have stopped taking disciples" and when they were still insistent he said "I will initiate those who bathe 35 times in the river." They accepted his condition and despite the biting cold they took 8 baths and would have continued further but Gurudev stopped them, and on the pretext of bath, after washing away their sins of past several births, he formally initiated them.

Lacking funds for their rerutn journey, they were thinking of selling their gold buttons. Gurudev stopped them from doing so and told them that Vrindavanji, the brother-in-law of Ramesh would loan them the money and they may return to Rajkot.

With tears of gratitude in their eyes, the devotees embarked on their return journey and Poojyashri, having completed his upasana, returned to Chitrakoot.

* * *

Acts of saints are beyond reason or science**Chapter – 23**

When Gurudev reached Paparenda, he fell prey to severe dysentery. As dehydration took its toll for 10 days, the frail body grew weaker and weaker, and had to be supported to toilet several times a day. We may think how can such “Anshavtari” having transcended laws of nature, fall prey to illness common among mortals?

One of the reasons could be that having taken on human form, the Mahatma too must obey ‘Kal-Dharma’ with all its’ consequences. Secondly having saved several devotees from last stages of death he had to pay the price by suffering some of those illnesses himself. Third reason could be that he himself might invite such illness to check up whether he had truly won over the body consciousness”

In Chitrakoot, Mouniji and Siyaramdasji were not well, the Yearly Bhandara after the sad demise of Ramsharandasji, could not be organized. When he learnt about this. Gurudev shook off his illness and got up to go to Chitrakoot. Devotees now understood that the illness was self inflicted, and as the occasion so demanded, he had cast it off.

Once again, while at Chitrakoot, the same disease returned with debility and dehydration, consequent upon 40 motions a day.

Doctors, from among devotees, came from Rajkot. One doctor who found his pulse growing weaker and weaker, broke down. He said to the Doctor “Brother ! Why do you worry ? This mortal body is perishable, when Shri Ram and Shri Krishna could not live forever, who am I ? But believe me, a Yogi can himself determine the time and place of his death. After thus consoling all and having lightened the heavy atmosphere, Gurudev left Chitrakoot, as if for nowhere, in that same condition !

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Nothing was heard about him for 6 months after which he returned as though nothing had ever happened.

After some time, Gurudev went to Hastam and was in time to attend the 'Pooranahuti' ceremony of 'Ram-Yagna'. As the ceremonial coconut was sacrificed in the Yagna fire with ghee, wild uncontrollable flames scorching things around, rose from the Kund. Screaming with panic, People started running helter skelter. The flames were of such height that the mango tree outside caught fire and wails of fire, fire were heard from all around.

Immediately Gurudev made a Yogic sign for the roaring fire to subside and it did.

A devotee asked him, "How did the fire subside?" He replied with a smile, "It is a simple mater, if one is firm in his resolve, nothing is impossible."

* * *

Experiments with Medication**Chapter – 24**

Sant Gurudev Prakashanandji (popularly known as Godadia Swami) and Gurudev embraced each other in the Rajkot dharamshala. After a little chitchat Godadia swami seriously asked Gurudev “Now, you will have to give me two promises”. Poojyashri replied with a smile “There is nothing which I can not give you.” Godadia swami asked first “Promise me that along with your usual diet of dry Roti, you will have some vegetables also” He added “This body ,machine needs to be oiled for proper functions.”

Gurudev agreed and asked “What is your second wish?” “That you should go to Bombay and consult Dr. Baliga” Godadiaji. Gurudev agreed. Swamiji called one of his devotees Nenshibhai to arrange for Gurudev’s stay and check up in Bombay. The devotees insisted that he should travel by plane. At the Bombay airport he was received by Harshadbhai and Dr. Chhabilbhai.

At that time Chhabilbhai was an atheist, but on meeting Gurudev, when he called him by his first name without any introduction, the newborn faith made him bow down with reverence.

Next day Dr. Baliga carried out a thorough check up and asked Gurudev his age. Gurudev replied “A sadhu should not be asked that question.” But when Dr. Baliga insisted that he needed the same for diagnostic purpose, Gurudev told him to write down any age that the doctor thought him to be.

The doctor asked with humility “Maharajshri will you take medicines and undergo an operation?” When Gurudev objected he said “There is a big tumour in your liver and it must be removed by surgery.” He told the devotees who were with Gurudev that the Tumour could be cancerous and the patient may not live for more than a week.

The devotees were shaken by this fearful diagnosis but Gurudev remained calm as though nothing had happened. He politely declined all

medical treatment and wished to leave Bombay on his return journey by train.

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After this incident, for several months there was no news about him. During this period he took only raw papaya to dissolve the tumour by dietary control alone.

Once during a train journey he fainted due to excessive pain. Seeing his sadhu dress the fellow travelers got him admitted to Bhopal hospital. The doctors over there had to stitch up his stomach which had become loose due to recession of the tumour.

When he regained consciousness, he jumped out from the ground floor window of his ward and disappeared. To the astonishment of all concerned, when he next appeared in Bombay, after some time, he was perfectly healthy with no sign of any illness whatsoever let alone the deadly cancer.

Truly,

*"If God wishes to preserve a person,
none can harm him, be it an enemy or disease."*

* * *

The infinite benevolence of Gurudev**Chapter – 25**

“The Guru who does not alleviate sorrows and fears of his disciple is not a Guru at all” Jairambhai Kotecha heard these words while offering pranam to Gurudev. As he went regularly to listen to Gurudev’s discourse at Andheri, this sentence remained inscribed on this mind.

Jamnadasbhai and his wife were fond of ‘Sadhu-seva’ and Mahatmas often came to their house. When he invited Gurudev to his home, Gurudev replied that he would come some day. When finally Gurudev paid a visit to his house, Jamnadasbhai offered Sashtang dandvat pranam. Gurudev knew about the shrewdness with which Jamnadasbhai could find out true saints from among false ones. Therefore whenever he offered pranam, Gurudev would ask jocularly “Jamnadasbhai is this pranam real or merely a courtesy?” Jamnadasbhai would promptly reply “of course real, how can I offer mere courteous pranam to a true saint and sanyasi like you?” Due to this ability of discerning the true from the false ones, Gurudev had given him the title ‘C.I.D. of saints’.

Once during an argument between Jamnadasbhai and Jairambhai concerning their doubt whether Hanumanji was essential interim deity which must be worshipped for true Ram-Bhakti of whether it was advisable to worship shri Ram directly, Gurudev intervened and said “Listen ! Try to understand the Etymological structure of the name ‘Hanumanta’ (Hanam-Ahanta), Shri Hanumanji’s name when thus analyzed means slayer of ego; and to truly know shri Ram, one must surrender his ego therefore Hanumanji can be compared to an advocate who would plead our case before shri Ram, the Judge. Thus in the court of shri Ram, devotion to shri Hanumanji would be considered a distinct advantage.

Some ladies present in the gathering wished to know whether women could recite ‘Hanuman Chalisa’ and similar ‘Stotras’? Gurudev replied “Why not, there is no scriptural ban as such.”

Jairambhai put another question "What is dream in wakeful state?" He replied "That is Samadhi, during 'samadhi' one experiences unity with 'Brahman' and the world becomes dreamlike."

Jairambhai :- "You always say that 'satsang' (Good Company) transforms our character, but I have heard that the great saint Raman Maharshi's own brother, was unlike the saint and this person Sarvadhikari was all the while engaged in collecting cash from the devotees." Gurudev's explanation was twofold, he said : Though both the water and the fish stay in physical contact all the time, their characteristics are totally different, thus mere physical proximity is no satsang, which is meeting of minds, then alone it can be called 'sat-sang'.

Secondly, just imagine an ant, which is crossing over a mountain of sugar with his mouth full of salt, till the ant has sense enough to spit out the salt, it can never experience the sweetness of sugar. Similarly till we cast off our evil vasanas, there is no chance of salvation."

Another Mahtma drew Gurudev's attention to the statement attributed to Gandhiji that he only worships the 'Brahman' Ram and not the son of Dashrath. Gurudev merely pointed out that at the end of his prayer meeting the 'Dhoon' that is chanted in Gandhiji's Prarthana Sabha' ————— 'Patit pavan Sitaram', makes it quite clear that both the 'Brahman' and Gandhiji's Ram, being Sitapati, are none other than the sons of king Dashrath and therefore the controversy was futile.

Several other questions were:-

- (1) Why Ram is called Raghupati ?
- (2) What tangible proof is there for the existence of 'Ishwara'?
- (3) "Gurudev ! you lay stress on 'Jap' whereas the scriptures insist on 'Dhayan', which is best ?"

Gurudev answered each of them with his inimitable clarity and in brief:-

- (1) Here, Raghu means 'Jiva' and its' master God is Raghupati.
- (2) Regarding proof of Ishwara's (God's) existence Gurudev pointed out that the existence of the word 'Ishwara' in itself was proof enough for the presence of the supreme reality in the Universe.

Secondly if someone were to stay cooped up in a dark cave, refusing to accept the sun, it does not mean that the sun is not real.

Yet another devotee presented the Arya-samaj view point that the formless Brahman can not acquire human form.

Gurudev replied "Why not ? If the Brahman can give form to the entire universe, why then, can it not give form to itself according to the likings of his devotees."

* * *

While at Andheri, Dr. Chhabilbhai felt the need to get prepared a pair of glasses for Gurudev's dimming eyes and gave him the pair along with a pen to write.

Making a pointed and loving reference to Dr. Chhabilbhai, Gurudev said "When I wear glasses I also remember your hot temper and when I lift the pen to write, I always think about your well being.

* * *

While Gurudev was admitted in a nursing home at opera house, he came to learn about a sadhu whose intestines had deteriorated due to excessive Yogic Kriyas and the sadhu also happened to be in the same nursing home. For the sadhu's benefit, Gurudev took an orange, chanted some mantra and gave it to the sadhu. After some time, due to Gurudev's blessings he was once again restored to good health.

Since Jairambhai's house was nearby, he requested Gurudev to come to his home, when Poojyashri visited them, Jairambhai performed ceremonial 'Aarti' and requested Gurudev to initiate both himself and his wife. He lovingly agreed, initiated them and also gave them the 'Kanthi' by way of autograph on his photo he wrote a devotional couplet in Hindi.

Later when Gurudev visited Prakashanandji to enquire after his health, Prakashanandji said "One who can control his 'Vritis' and 'Vasanas' is a saint but one who is totally devoid of these two (i.e. Vritis and Vasanas) is God." Saying thus he wished to indicate divine nature of Gurudev.

After a few days, as Gurudev had Known in advance, Prakashanandji left the mortal world.

* * *

I give below in Jairambhai's own words how Gurudev was instrumental in making him truly free from all fears and sorrows :-

In 1952 my business suffered a greet setback. Being prostrated with grief I wrote to Gurudev, who gave me courage by replying "Don't worry, if you surrender unto the will of God, in due course, all calamities will pass away."

Gurudev's electrifying prediction came to be true, slowly but steadily things improved and finally returned to normal.

At another time, I was suffering from severe desyentry and dehydration had set in, death was staring me right in the face. I repeatedly chanted Gurudev's name and wrote to him in Orissa.

He caught the first train for Bombay and drove straight to my nursing home. He came to my bed, and passed his benign hands lovingly over my head and slowly I recovered, defying sure and certain death."

This is how Gurudev made his own words, heard by Jairambhai at beginning of this chapter, come true "A true Guru is one who removes fears and sorrows from his disciple's life."

*"Seek and thou shalt be given,
Pray and thou shalt be granted."*

* * *

**Nothing is impossible
for a true Tapasvi**

Chapter – 26

Both the Bombay and Rajkot devotees wished that on Gurupurnima of 1949, Poojyashri should be present among them. Finally, a viamedia was found. On the same day, after accepting pranam from Bombay devotees, he would go to Rajkot by plane and then return likewise to Bombay on the same day by evening.

As planned, after the Bombay function, he went to Rajkot; the devotees had chartered a plane from Bombay for his return journey, though the pilot went right up to Rajkot he could not locate the airport. May be because the Rajkot devotees were to have the good fortune to have Gurudev with them for one extra day.

Finally on the next day, Dr.Chhabilbhai and Batukbhai accompanied the plane and showed the Rajkot airport to the pilot.

On their return journey while they were having some tea, the plane as though flew into a deathtrap. A vicious cyclonic storm surrounded it and the pilot lost control over the flight mechanism. The plane lost altitude and was being tossed around like a reed. Realizing the danger, the devotees aboard started recitation of Hanuman chalisa and praying for dear life.

Being aware of the fact that a great saint was on board, the pilot surrendered himself unto him by mentally prostrating at his feet, and prayed for salvation from the impending calamity.

Devkaranbhai asked Gurudev, "Baba ! what shall we do now ?" With absolute self confidence and in a controlled and solemn tone he said "Do not worry, everything will be fine."

As though on cue, in a moment, things returned to normal as if there had never been a storm.

In the clear weather, they sighted blue lighted runway of Bombay Airport, and the plane landed safely, though in a highly damaged condition.

The grateful pilot offered pranam to Gurudev for his divine grace. The plane had to be towed to the hangar and could never fly again. The unfortunate pilot, who was saved this time, died later as destined, in another plane crash.

This aerial drama of rescue from sure death for the occupants of the plane was truly an act of God, due to Gurudev's blessings for his devotees.

* * *

Initiation of Dr. Chhabildasbhai**Chapter – 27**

For Gurudev's stay in Bombay, a Kutir near Dindoshi hills, amidst peaceful surroundings with a small garden, was fixed up. There were flowers all around.

Bhagirathi Ma of Pushkar and Haribhai were to be in attendance upon Gurudev to assist him.

Gurudev's strict rule was to cook his own frugal meal of boiled vegetables and wheat 'Tikkad', however he accepted Bhagirathi Ma's assistance to chop the raw vegetables before he cooked them.

Once after his meal Gurudev asked "Ma ! From the aura of particles, I feel that you have obtained some other person's assistance in preparing the vegetables." After short guilty silence she replied "Yes, I had taken help from the cook." Gurudev could always make out who had touched his food from the aura emanation from such particles.

He used to explain that as the waters of a placid lake could get rippled even by the drop of a tiny stone, similarly our mental peace can also be ruffled by the mental processes of the person handling our food. Touch of a serene mind gives sense of peace and in contrast the touch of a disturbed mind could adversely affect our thought processes.

* * *

Dr. Chhabildasbhai was to be initiated in that kutir. Preparations for the Yagna fire were completed but due to the rainy season the soggy wood was not considered suitable for the fire. On realizing their worries, Gurudev told everyone to leave the room for a while and return later. When they reentered through the reopened doors after some time, they saw to their surprise that the formerly damp and soggy wood was burning without a trace of smoke and gave out clear fire, as if there was no dampness in the first place.

As the 'Diksha' ceremony proceeded, Gurudev said "Chhabil ! Concentrate your gaze unflinchingly at the fire" During the process, Chhabilbhai felt that Gurudev was constantly looking at him alone.

Throwing a few drops of water in the fire, Gurudev said "Chhabil ! Now all your past sins have been burnt out by this fire and henceforth, you will have to conduct yourself as I direct you, now what will be my Gurudakshina ?" "Whatever you may ask" replied Chhabilbhai. Gurudev proceeded further "Chhabil ! Promise me two things :-

(1) Be kind to the poor at all times and (2) Because of your profession there are temptations of female company; so be constant and faithful towards your family and wife, like our Ishta Dev shri Ram, This will be my Gurudakshina and if you deviate from your promise, I am sure to know."

Later, Devkaranbhai obtained Gurudev's permission to construct a Guru-Mandir in the kutir grounds and Poojyashri attended the inaugural ceremony.

* * *

In 1949, at Killeshwar near Bhanwad of Jamnagar District, Gurudev commenced his 'Kashta Moun' upasana for two months. During this period of absolute solitude and silence, a so called Sadhu of 'Aghori' cult tried to break-in to disturb Gurudev by clinging over the compound walls. However he was scared away by a venomous serpent.

Though Bhimji Bapa was in attendance to assist him, Gurudev preferred to do all of his own work.

To observe his vow of not meeting anyone else during the upasna, he would come out at 2.00 a.m. In the night to draw the necessary water from the adjacent well. Once however with a view to pleasing Bhimji Bapa and as an exception, he used the water drawn by him as a mark of appreciation of Bapa's selfless services.

* * *

God protects the true devotees from evils**Chapter – 28**

"It is my responsibility to secure the well being of those of my devotees, who surrender totally and faithfully unto me and who place their trust in me alone to the exclusion of all others"-

God in Geeta.

The Darbar of Bhadwa shri Chandrasinhji had got prepared a cave-like abode with underground retreat for Gurudev's Sadhana. Once when Gurudev came up from there, after completing his upasana, to sit among devotees, he was looking a bit upset and was constantly massaging his index finger. Chandrasinhji asked "Bapu ! Is something wrong ?".

Gurudev replied "I felt that some insect down there has bitten me, let some one go and take a look." When he went down with a lamp, Chandrasinhji was surprised to see a black scorpion lying dead. He brought it up to show to Gurudev, who said "Poor fellow he bit me, but instead of me, he died."

How very strange and surprising that Gurudev's total immersion in his sadhana, and attainment of oneness with Brahman' made him unaware and immune to the most painful bite of a deadly scorpion ?

* * *

Once in 1950 in one of his pravachanas in Rajkot Gurudev said "One of names of God is 'Vishwambhar' i.e. provider of nourishment to the entire Universe, and on one occasion, I experienced this at first hand. I was travelling across a vast, barren and sandy desert with infinite expanse of sand as far as my sight could travel. There was no shade or shelter from the scorching heat. I was extremely hungry but did not have any provisions with me. Being exhausted and in need of nourishment I surrendered myself unto God for his grace. Suddenly, as if out of nowhere, a man bearing a basketful of ripe mangoes appeared and asked me "Babaji ! Have some mangoes" then I realized that such a miracle occurred

because of my total and whole hearted surrender unto the infinite mercy of 'Vishwambhar' (The nourisher of universe)

In his world we may wake up hungry but he would not allow us to sleep with an empty belly."

Gurudev was extremely fond of distributing mangoes among the children and also of watching them eating it. On his visits to Guna and Anantpur (during season) he would load the car with mangoes and distribute them among the kids. They in turn showed their love for him by fondly calling him as 'Aam Baba'. (The mango saint)

* * *

Eye Camp Begins at Chitrakoot

Chapter – 29

Shrimad Bhagwat says :-

"Immersing themselves in thoughts of public Good, the saints forget themselves and therefore God fulfills all their resolves."

Once Gurudev came across a helpless blindman, who dashed with a wall and was badly hurt on the head. At this sight his tender heart was very much pained and he resolved to organize some system whereby persons whose eyesight could be corrected would be helped.

During that time princess Kanakba of Rajkot had died prematurely. Gurudev consoled the grief stricken parents with kind and compassionate words. They had set aside Rs. 10,000/- to commemorate the late princess and they placed the sum at Gurudev's feet with full discretionary powers about use.

* * *

After some time when Gurudev was in Bombay, Nenshibhai, whose wife had died recently with uncured blindness, came to meet him. Her two sons Harshadbhai and Devkaranbhai felt sad because despite their wealth and best treatment, their mother's blindness could not be cured.

Once, in Chandivli Gurudev told them pointedly "Even now you can be of service to your late mother by being of service to thousands of such mothers, who need your help, and are all over India." He added, "I have a deposit of Rs. 10,000/- in Sitapur P.O. to be utilized in memory of Kanakba, late princess of Rajkot, you can contribute whatever you choose."

Thus the idea of first eye camp was crystallizing around the name of Kanakba. Gurudev left for Chitrakoot. The news that an eye camp was being organized spread like wild fire. The simple villagers could not understand what an eye camp meant but for them whatever their 'Bade Sarkar' did, could not be anything short of a miracle.

On receiving the news about eye-camp, Avantibai rushed to Chitrakoot, but after initial greetings, instead of welcoming their enthusiasm, Gurudev told them to return to Anantpur. She was puzzled at this rebuff but understood when they returned to Anantpur. During their absence, Rameshbhai had lost his wife and he was almost out of his mind and needed their healing company.

* * *

At the end of 1950, on Kartik Vad 1st, the eye-camp was inaugurated by Gurudev and Dr. Ratilal Shah performed the first operation.

Gurudev stayed at Jankikund but the patients and the volunteers were accommodated in a camp at Pramodvan, about a mile's distance from the kund. Being the first such camp, the arrangements were of a makeshift nature. The patients had to sleep on straw beds. There was neither a conventional operation table nor strature or cots for the patients. The wooden charpoy strung with coir had to serve as table as well as strature and the 'Shamiyana' erected in the open served as an operation theater.

No sooner one operation got over another patient was carried in on a new cot by the volunteers. For all the works such as fetching in and out of patients, post operative care, treatment, catering etc. only a very limited number of volunteers were available. However despite this shortage of man power, the enthusiastic volunteers worked for long hours and their energies were recharged by the benign touch of Gurudev's hands which he placed on their head when they offered their pranam.

Some of them were so surcharged with almost super human energy that they worked at times for 20 to 22 hours at a stretch. Gurudev's encouraging words resounded in their minds "These needy and poor patients are incarnation of Lord Narayana and they have come to us in this disguise of make our services unto him worthy and worthwhile."

Those attending on Gurudev say that for all the four weeks of the camp no one saw him sleeping. Even at the end of a tiring day he would prepare a sumptuous meal for nourishment of the volunteers. Despite

round the clock exertion none could see even a trace of fatigue on his serene face.

In those days there was a dense forest full of wild and ferocious animals like Lions, Tiger, Cheetah etc. around Chitrakoot. They roamed freely even in broad day light. In view of this, Gurudev had drawn an invisible boundary line (with his Yogic powers) beyond which these beasts could not come.

On the last day of the camp, Gurudev took all the devotees to Ansooyaji and on the way showed them his kutir on the bank of Juri River in which he stayed for his tapasya. He also showed them the mango tree planted by him. From the adjacent grounds he dug out some roots and potatoes used by him as food during that period. He treated them to a sumptuous feast over there.

In that eye camp about 9000 patients were examined, a thousand operation were performed with a success rate of 96%. On the concluding day, Devkaranbhai recalled that it was the 'Poonyatithi' of his mother, thus Gurudev had chosen an auspicious day for concluding camp.

A 'Panch-Koshi' Bhandara was also organized whereby saints within 25 miles of the camp were served with meals. Thus a true service was indeed rendered to the memory of Devkaranbhai's mother.

While concluding the camp, Gurudev addressed all the devotees in a voice surcharged with emotion :-

"With the grace of shri Rama and your untiring zeal and efforts we have been able to organize this camp without a hitch. You have seen for yourself the deep sense of gratitude on those faces whose eye sights have been restored.

In all humility we must believe that instead of our being of service to them, these patients have made our efforts worthwhile by coming to us. Your work here has been unprecedented and worthy, what can I do for you in return?" They replied as if in one voice "Bapu ! We want nothing more than your blessings to be able to serve under you."

Gurudev gave his blessings thus :-

"May God give you health, wealth and may he enable you to serve even better in future, our next eye camp will be in Guna."

Gurudev explained to the devotees that service in an eye camp was not an ordinary matter, these services of poor and downtrodden people had the inherent potential of washing away our sins of the past. Thus assured the devotees felt this to be a God given opportunity for atonement of sins and they went home with renewed faith and determination to participate in similar camps again and again.

During the eye camp people saw various aspects of Gurudev's personality. His abiding love for suffering humanity, his sense of being in harmony with God, so that while serving each and every person, he felt that he was rendering this service to God himself.

By his acts, Gurudev set an example for mankind in general and for his devotees in particular that service of humanity was the true service of God. By way of analogy of confluence of the three sacred rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and Sarawati, we can call the eyecamps confluence of the poor man's body, the rich man's wealth and the efforts of the middle class coming together with Gurudev's person as the holy prayagraj (sangam)

He bade good bye to all the devotees telling them to return to their homes and informed them that he was thinking of undertaking 'Kashta Moun' Upasana with the blessings of God and he left Chitrakoot.

* * *

Wish fulfillment of devotees**Chapter – 30**

Jadavjibhai, a Lohana by caste had his vegetable shop in the market, and was fond of distributing sweet pieces among children who said 'Jai-Siya Ram'. He also encouraged them to visit Gurudev's ashram in Rajkot.

Being a person of devout nature and strong faith he believed in divinity of Gurudev and surrendered unto him to get salvation from this 'Sansar', with the passage of time, he lost all interest in worldly activities and entrusted his business to his younger brother and resided for full time in Gurudev's ashram.

He devoted the entire day to 'Sadhan-Bhajan', meditation and on rare occasions he cooked his own simple and frugal meal. During meditation he reached such a perfect stage of 'Samadhi' where he could see Gurudev in person, and he would know all about his actions and present place of residence. Gurudev himself confirmed it by saying "Jadav knows all about me and my actions."

Once when Gurudev was in a benevolent mood Jadavjibhai asked him for the following 3 wishes :-

- (1) My life should end in a holy place.
- (2) Shukla paksha Chaturthi should be my last day on earth.
- (3) and above all, at the time of my death you must place your benign hand on my head, and I should leave the world with my attention fixed firmly on your divine form.

Gurudev said with a smile "God willing, your wishes will come true." However Jadavjibhai was smarter, he wrote down his wishes on a piece of paper and requested Gurudev to sign it. At his insistence Poojyashri did so and Jadavjibhai took the paper and preserved it till the very end as though his life depended on it.

As years passed he was caught by T.B. in its terminal stages and he increased his 'Sadhan-Bhajan' and as his end drew nearer, two other devotees took Jadavjibhai to Chitrakoot for Gurudev's last Darshan.

Over there Gurudev was in 'Kashta Moun'. During this period some sadhus, doubting such rigorous form of sadhana checked up the entire place of Samadhi to locate holes which could supply fresh air to him during Samadhi. But when they found the genuineness of his sadhana they too started revering him like other devotees. Truly one can never measure the 'Siddhas' by our worldly standards.

Having supervised the herculean project of the 'Maha-Yagna, Gurudev had chosen to remain in a state of 'Avichal Samadhi', meaning total cessation of bodily and mental processes and yet even during this period on account of his Yogic powers Gurudev could achieve anything and reach any place on earth.

This is a stage in Upasana as described by Lord Krishna as 'Samadhi' in the Gita. During the Samadhi, a sadhak achieves a state of non-duality with the supreme 'Brahman' Like a radio transmitter, sending forth electronic waves through the medium of ether, a sadhak, during this stage, is in contact with the entire universe through the medium of his thought vibrations. On paper this may sound strange but the saints, who have experienced this state of super and supreme consciousness will bear testimony to its truth.

On the 2nd day of Bhadrapad Shukla Paksh, Gurudev opened the doors of his kutir and gave Darshan to devotees who were eagerly awaiting this moment since last 2 months. Along with others, Jadavjibhai offered his pranam. The sat-sang continued till 11-00 p.m. and when the crowd had dispersed Jadavjibhai finding the needed solitude asked "Bapu ! so far you have fulfilled all my wishes, now for my last journey, on my way to shri Hari, I want your permission to leave this world and please remember your last promise to me."

Moved by such matchless faith and devotion Poojayshri said "May shri Ram fulfill all your wishes."

Now, as if fully recovered from all his illnesses, he returned to his quarters after offering pranam.

Next, as if fully recovered from all his illnesses, he returned to his quarters after offering pranam.

Next day was the 3rd tithi of Bhadrapad Shukla paksha. When Bhimji Bapa found Jadavjibhai on the verge of death at 9-00 a.m. he rushed to Gurudev, who was busy giving discourse to saints. On hearing the sad news, Gurudev rushed to his bedside and ordered his body to be place on ground for last rites, he told every body to leave the room and close the doors. People who were outside, could now distinctly hear the words "Jadav, Jadav, open your eyes and look who is facing you." After some time he called every body in and said "Let Jadav be placed back on the cot, he won't be leaving us now but only at 8-00 p.m. in the evening, He added "Today we have a Bhandara and how can Jadav leave before feeding the Sadhus?"

When he resumed his pravachan to the saints, some of them asked "What is the condition of your disciple, Swarniji?" Gurudev replied calmly in a confident tone "You may go and look for yourself." They went there and after noting his condition, they told Gurudev "Your disciple will surely die within one hour," again his confident reply was "No, he will leave this world exactly at 8-00 p.m. to night."

Knowing that Jadavjibhai could not survive for more than an hour, they kept a strict vigil outside Jadavjibhai's room. Meanwhile to everyone's surprise, the patient appeared to be in perfect bliss, free from all sufferings, he kept on smiling and opening and closing his eyes at regular interval.

The Sadhu-Bhojan commenced in the evening, and the lunar tithi changed from 3rd to 4th at 8-00 p.m. and then as predicted by Gurudev, Jadavjibhai closed his eyes forever. To honour the promise that he had given to Jadavjibhai, Gurudev postponed his death from 9-00 in the morning till 8-00 in the evening, by his divine powers.

Thus exactly on 4th tithi of shukla paksha, in a holy place (Chitrakoot) with his head touched by Gurudev's benign hands,

Jadavjibhai got his promise fulfilled. The doubting sanyasis, having seen this miracle, promptly became Gurudev's disciples.

By way of last rites his body was bathed with holy waters, anointed with chandan, clothed in a new dress and seated in a yogic posture and garlanded by Poojyashri. With the saints as his poll bearers, his last journey resounded with chants of 'Ram-Nam'. Gurudev said "Jadav's devotion obliged me to grant him his wishes, and shri Ram kindly helped to fulfill my obligation."

Among thousands of devotees Jadavjibhai was perhaps the only one who fully recognized Gurudev's divinity and used this knowledge to obtain his wishes whereby he was assured of salvation.

Though Gurudev often made the statement that he did not believe in miracles, what happened in the present case was nothing short of a public miracle.

Though every one of his devotees, at some time or other, experienced things nearing a miracle in their lives, what Jadavjibhai could achieve by his faith and devotion was indeed unique.

Jadavjibhai realized what Geeta says about faith and surrender and left behind an example for emulation by all devotees.

"Only those who completely surrender unto me with true faith can realize me and see my divine light." Lord Krishna — Geeta.

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Dinubhai's Good Fortune**Chapter – 31**

Though Dinubhai and Jayaben were married before several years, they had no child. The entire family was unhappy on account of this situation.

Dr. Purandare, a leading Gynaecologist had operated on Jayaben without any result. When they consulted Dr. Shirodkar, he gave his firm opinion that Jayaben's ovaries were so formed that child bearing was not possible, he ruled out further operation and advised them that it was futile to waste further amounts on medical treatment.

When Gurudev heard about it he told Jayaben "You make it a point to attend the next eye camp. Your devoted services to the poor and needy and your help in alleviation of their suffering may get you their blessings for a child."

Jayaben faithfully followed these instructions. After some months, Gurudev sent a telegram to Dinubhai's mother in Gondal and called her to Dwarika and told her "Ma ! now I am convinced that Jaya will have a child after 5 months, better get her medically checked up and let me know."

Since Jayaben had her usual menses over very long intervals of 6 to 8 months due to her health, no one was aware of these glad tidings. She was once again taken to Dr. Shirodkar who confirmed Gurudev's (joyous) prediction with a pleasant surprise and said "Such things can happen only by divine grace."

The girl thus born with Gurudev's blessings was named Madhuri. Once Poojyashri saw her playing among children with peels of laughter. Gurudev told Jayadev "Jaya ! Madhuri has grown up and is asking for a brother." Later after the birth of a son, Jagdish, Gurudev remarked "Now do not hope for more."

For confirmation they consulted Dr. Shirodkar and on Jayaben's check up he found that her ovaries had receded to their former position and further child bearing was not possible.

Both the husband and wife were overwhelmed with gratitude for Gurudev's divine grace.

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The Benevolent influence of 'Ram-Nam'**Chapter – 32**

Shri Bhogibhai, who was very fond of Ram-Nam sankirtan and Jap as well as Sadhu-seva, had his first Darshan of Gurudev during 'Ram-Maha-Yagna' in Rajkot.

In 1952, when Gurudev came to Jamnagar after celebrating Guru poornima in Rajkot, Bhogibhai came for darshan. When Gurudev, By way of blessings put a 'Tilak' on his forehead, Bhogibhai felt electrified by the touch. He says his true 'Sharnagati' started from that day onwards. He told Gurudev "None can attain salvation from this world without the divine grace of Mahatmas like you. How could a spiritual pygmy like me reach out and experience your infinite presence?"

Gurudev merely smiled.

Bhogibhai has a tile factory in Jamnagar, he asked "Bapu, will you grace my factory by your visit?"

Gurudev promptly agreed and said "Why not, your factory is owned by God and you are only his representative and you must discharge your duties over there without the sense of attachment or that of being the owner."

During the visit to the factory, Gurudev took a complete round and wrote on the photograph that was presented for his autograph, "Indeed it is certain that the Lord alone can inspire and protect us in our efforts and undertakings."

That factory continues to produce superior quality tiles. Bhogibhai firmly believes that it is managed by some divine power.

After this visit, Bhogibhai became more and more introspective and felt the presence of God incarnate in the person of Gurudev.

At times he would become choked with emotions at the very sight of him and instead of coming nearer like others, he would offer his pranam from the distance and sit humbly on the very edge of the gathering of devotees.

At the time of Bhogibhai's formal initiation, Gurudev signed the photograph with the words "He alone is the true partaker of the fruits of his actions, who does so with a thoughtful mind."

This sentence gave Bhogibhai inexhaustible strength to remain equanimous and patient in prosperity and calamity alike. He felt that Gurudev's presence was always there with him to guide and shield him.

After the initiation, he used to devote more and more time to chanting of "Shri Ram Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram." Writing of Ram-Nam and 'Sankirtan' became his life's mission.

* * *

Founding of shri Raghuvir Temple

Chapter – 33

An idol of shri Lalji, installed many years ago in a cave near Janki Kund was being worshipped by people ceremoniously. By passage of time, the cave to be the temple itself.

In view of this, Mouniji wished to have proper temple for the idol near Janki Kund. The matter was placed before Gurudev and he replied "Constructing a new temple is a good idea, but it may bring along several administrative burdens, yet if all of you think it proper, you may go ahead."

Since the cause was dear to all the devotees, after Gurudev's permission, they started the work of construction amidst chants of joy and cheer.

The work lasted for two years and during this period, Bhimji Bapa, Stayed there full time and even the Mahatmas exerted to their utmost ability and got the work carried out by selected artisans from all over India.

During this period, one Brahmin child came to the Kund and desired to be disciple of Gurudev. He was accepted and given the 'Virakta' initiation with due ceremony.

At the Kund, the child initiate came to be known as Janardandasji Maharaj. In addition two other boys came with similar objective and one of them was known as Thakoredasji Maharaj.

On completion of the temple, Gurudev, who was at that time in Bhavnagar, was duly invited to perform the inauguration ceremony. When he accepted, the entire atmosphere of the kund became joyous with anticipation.

For nine days prior to the day of inauguration, continuous recitation of shri Ramayanji and 'Sankirtan' by Bhogibhai and his troupe was organized.

Bhandaras for Mahatmas with sumptuous dishes were held. Several devotees and Saints and Mahatmas came over there.

On 15th March 1953 on Ram Navmi day, Gurudev supervised the work of installation of the idol of shri Lalji in the new temple with due ceremony, the actual installation was done by Jamanbhai the worthy son of Bhimji Bapa. Gurudev had insisted on shri Lalji's idol because as he said, though the temple was new, the idol which was being worshipped all throughout by the devotees, was that of shri Lalji.

By the grace of Gurudev, the inauguration ceremony was accomplished without any hitch or hinderance.

For these nine days, even the notorious monkeys of Chitrakoot never bothered any one with their pranks.

* * *

The Pilgrimage to Badri-Kedar

Chapter – 34

After the temple inauguration, the devotees requested Gurudev to bless them with his divine company on their pilgrimage to BadriKedar.

Gurudev replied "I won't come alone, there will be about 10 Mahatmas and a few poor along with me."

To this Nenshibhai replied "Let all who are desirous to come accompany us, it will be a pleasure to arrange for their expenses."

Having agreed, Poojyashri asked some of the present company "Haricharan, shall we go?" Haricharandasji replied in the positive, when Gurudev asked him about his indifferent health, he replied that with Gurudev's blessings he would be able to bear the inclemencies of the weather.

"Alright then prepare for the journey and also make a list of those who would like to come along, but make it clear that only those who can bear the physical hardships of the journey should give their names."

About 10 Mahatmas, 50 devotees and 50 villagers joined the group. Omkarbhai and Vaishnavdasji were put in charge of administrative work for the group of pilgrims.

On the way to Haridwar, several devotees came to their respective Rly. Stations to have Darshan.

At Haridwar Gurudev told the devotees "You have taken great pains by joining the yatra, so do not waste your time on trivialities but use it for 'Swadhyay' "*Geeta Path*" and "*Nam-Smaran*".

The journey from Haridwar to Rudra Prayag was to be by bus. When some devotees requested Gurudev to use a car for his comfort, he politely declined and preferred to bear all the hardship along with the other pilgrims.

On the way at Shrinagar, where the accommodation was insufficient, some misguided devotees look over all the available rooms for their use, and the sadhus had to camp in the open on river bank.

This improper behavior gave Gurudev immense pain, he chose to stay in a tent along with the sadhus.

The crestfallen devotees, who now realized their mistake, rushed to the river bank to bring back Gurudev. He replied quietly "For us Sadhus, the river bank is the only appropriate place."

Wiser by this incident, for the rest of the journey the devotees always made prior arrangement for the sadhus yet often out of choice, Gurudev preferred to camp on the river bank, in a tent.

He would ask by name about each person's well being and would rest only when all others in the group were properly looked after and settled comfortably.

When the group was about one mile away from Badrinath, and on a slippery and steep road, it started to rain heavily. Though the pilgrims felt worried, Gurudev told them to get ahead of him and he would stay on their rear and at some distance from them.

They saw to their surprise that while they remained dry, the rain was falling on Gurudev and soaking his clothes, just a few yards behind them. Gurudev thus bore the brunt of the inclement weather to keep the devotees safe and dry. No sooner they reached their destination, it rained heavily and incessantly throughout the night.

Thus by his yogic powers, Gurudev took upon himself the hardships and consequent illnesses of his devotees to enable them to complete the pilgrimage. He acted like a fond father, who takes upon himself the hardships that are meant for his children. Similarly Gurudev took upon himself the rigours of the journey and kept his devotees free from harm.

On completion of the journey, by way of blessings and advice, Gurudev addressed the devotees thus :-

"Formerly only Sadhus Could undertake this pilgrimage, you have seen for yourself the sort of hardships that have to be borne even in

present times. In order to commemorate the pilgrimage, formerly people used to give up some eatables like brinjals, potatoes, rice etc. But if you truly wish to derive real benefit from the pilgrimage, take a vow that hence forth you will not cause any harm to others, that you will be compassionate and kind to the poor and be truthful in your business deals. Remember to chant the name of the Lord as often as possible. If you wish that your birth in human form becomes fruitful, then give up your vices instead of mere eatables.

* * *

At Gondal, Haribhai Adatia had insisted on several occasions that Gurudev should takeover the management of local Ram Mandir. Though he showed reluctance at first, he finally agreed and suggested formation of a trust and the supervision of the Mandir and the adjacent Ashram was left to Mouniji.

Later, Haricharandasji was sent from Chitrakoot to relieve Mouniji.

During this period, shri Ram Sanskrit Maha Vidyalaya was established at Chitrakoot, on Guru Poornima day.

* * *

Reforming influence of a Saint

Chapter – 35

In Rajkot, whenever Gurudev gave discourses, Natubhai would come and listen, and at the end, offer his pranam from a distance and leave.

Despite opposition from his family, Natubhai was engaged in the nefarious trading of narcotics like Ganja and Charas. As a last resort, the family approached Gurudev.

He sent for Natubhai and advised him to mend his ways, and told him to open a pan-shop. His elder brother was willing to provide all the assistance for his rehabilitation.

However Natubhai could not benefit from this sage counsel and continued with his evil activities.

Once again Poojyashri called him to his kutir. When Natubhai arrived Gurudev was eating few pieces of a fruit and he gave a handful to Natubhai as prasad and told him sharply "Natu, now you had better listen, if you still persist in your evil ways, the police will nab you and ruin your life".

Like a delinquent child, who ignores well meaning advice of his father, Natubhai ignored even this final warning and at last fell into the hands of Bombay police.

He was pushed into the police van, for being taken to the police station. On the way, Natubhai recalled Gurudev's final warning and mentally prostrated himself before him.

After chanting Gurudev's name several times, he gathered enough courage to plead before the officer-in-charge "Please let me go this one time, I promise that I will never indulge in such activity again."

Somehow the reverential chanting of Gurudev's name and the Prasad of few pieces of fruit showed their benevolent effect. He was let off with a few slaps and not booked for prosecution and subsequent jail term.

Natubhai considered this narrow escape from imprisonment as divine grace of Gurudev, due to which he was let off so lightly. He considered this as a sign to mend his ways.

Despite Natubhai's initial disobedience, Gurudev's infinite kindness saved him from penal servitude in jail. After this Natubhai never reverted to his former evil ways but led the life of an honest, civic minded and useful citizen.

Truly it has been said :-

*"If you rise from prayers a better man,"
You have your prayers answered"*

- W. Shakespeare

* * *

Kashta Moun in Jamnagar

Chapter - 36

Observing that his worldly activities were increasing, Gurudev resolved to undergo Kashta-Moun upasana of long duration and informed the devotees.

Jamnadasbhai made all arrangements for the same in his farm house at Jamnagar. On Ram Navmi day 1954, Gurudev left Chitrakoot and reached Jamnagar on Hanuman Jayanti. There was a bungalow and a small Kutir with 2 rooms and attached toilet with an underground structure. Gurudev chose the simple Kutir.

There was hand pump for drawing water from below the ground, and the place was surrounded by a tall boundry wall, which gave him adequate solitude. A small window was provided in the door for emergency use and access.

Jamnadasbhai asked "Bapu, though you will be in Samadhi for most of the time, yet at intervals you may choose to interrupt the same, there should be some provisions to sustain and nourish the body."

Gurudev replied "Well, let there be provision of wheat flour for about 15 days." Jamnadasbhai insisted and obtained permission for including some green vegetables also. Gurudev cautioned him that there may be occasions when he may not feel the physical needs like hunger etc. for 30 to 40 days at a stretch and not to worry on such occasion.

Jamnadasbhai made all arrangements such as cooking stove, coals etc. and read out Gurudev's message to the assembled devotees :-

"Do not be upset by my long absence, be cheerful and remember that in spirit, I will always be with you. Let your time be spent on remembering the name of the Lord."

For the first 15 days, Gurudev observed simple 'Moun' then on 5-5-1954, at 7-20 a.m. merely with the words "720 days", in the presence of several devotees, he entered the kutir. At the thought of this long separation from their Gurudev, the devotees were prostrate with grief.

The condition of the devotees was similar to the citizen of Ayodhya during 14 years 'Van-Vas' of shri Ram.

The devotees spent their time on reading Ramayanji, and 12th Chapter of Geeta.

Jamnadasbhai visited the farmhouse everyday without fail, for seeing to Gurudev's probable needs, he would change old vegetables and put in fresh ones. In the diary that he maintained for this 720 day period, he had noted that Gurudev must have attained Samadhi state 15 times.

Some times, 39 days and at other times 78 days would pass at a stretch, without Gurudev lifting any provisions. Thus for a total of 510 days Gurudev did not lift any provisions.

During the second summer of the upasana, the underground source of water for the hand pump went dry. Gurudev experienced lot of difficulties because his vow of 'Kashta-Moun' did not envisage communication with or even seeing another human being. His relation was only to be with God almighty.

Since a 'Tapasvi' like Gurudev had undertaken such a difficult and arduous 'Upasana', for the benefit of the entire country, Lord 'Varuna' (God of Water) performed a miracle and breaking open the hard flooring of cement tiles, a divine spring appeared for the convenience of Gurudev.

When the period of 720 days was nearing completion, a group of around 500 devotees from Rajkot started on a 'pad-yatra' towards Jamnagar. They passed from village after village with Gurudev's photo on a silver chair and the Brahmins chanted Mantras and Stanzas in blessings and benediction. Amidst shouts of 'Jay Jaykar' they reached Jamnagar in 5 day's time.

Exactly at 7-10 a.m. on 24-4-56, as scheduled, Gurudev, with a two year growth of silvery beard and glowing personality, the result of 2 years yog-sadhana, gave Darshan to all the devotees who were present over there.

Jamnadasbhai welcomed the devotees who had come from outside Jamnagar, and looked after their comforts. All who had come for

the Darshan offered their devout pranam to the holy spring which had miraculously appeared there for Gurudev's convenience.

Each one took a sip by way of 'Achamana', and some of them filled their bottles with the holy water, yet the stream remained unexhausted as though perennial.

Haricharandasji had come along with others who had come from Chitrakoot. Gurudev asked "How come you are here Haricharan?" He replied, and told him all about his duties in charge of the Ram-Mandir and Ashram at Gondal. Gurudev gave his approval and blessings for success in the management of Ashram at Gondal.

Later, Gurudev visited several villages in Saurashtra before leaving for Chitrakoot with the group of devotees (who had taken up the path of sadhana for full time).

After finishing the work at Chitrakoot, and having entrusted the full responsibility of management to Janardandasji, Gurudev told Haricharandasji "Haricharan, we must leave now." The puzzled Haricharandasji asked "Now? It is already nearing the end of the day." Gurudev replied "Do as I say, you do not know the reason."

On the way to the car he explained "We are leaving now because tomorrow at 3-00 a.m. it will rain heavily and all the culverts and bridges will be washed away and the road will become unpassable, therefore we must reach Jhansi before 3-00 a.m. tomorrow.

They reached Jhansi exactly at 3-00 a.m. and it started raining heavily and as predicted, the roads were flooded with knee deep water. Next day, on reaching Ujjain, Gurudev sent Haricharandasji to supervise arrangements for Guru-poornima celebrations to Gondal and he went else where for solitude.

On the appointed day, he reached Gondal and on Guru Poomima day the ceremonial Poojan, Archan, Shringar and Aarati of Shri Ram were done by himself..

After completing all formalities Gurudev went once again to Jamnagar.

*"Through of the repeated reflections,
One finds sufficient light for prayers."*

Dr. Urmila Sharma Collection, Varanasi

Gurudev keeps his promise to Sunder Ma.

Chapter—37

While Gurudev was undergoing his Upasana at Jamnagar, he was in the Kutir in front of thousands of devotees, and he had not gone anywhere nor met anybody for 2 years.

During the same time period, Sunderbai, mother of Avantibai, whom Gurudev had accepted as mother and promised to be with her in her last moments, was on her death bed.

Suddenly one day, when he was all the while in reality in Jamnagar, people in Anantpur saw Gurudev alighting from a bus. Though Rameshbhai and several other relatives were in the same bus, they could not recognize him, due to the growth of beard.

He stayed till the very end with Sunder Ma, keeping her cheerful and contented till she breathed her last. He took part in the performance of her last rites by placing sandal wood on the funeral pyre as promised earlier to Sunder Ma, as her son. As ceremonial duty of a son, after performing her last rites, he got his head and beard shaved as was customary for a son and departed as if for nowhere.

He had warned everybody, before leaving Anantpur, not to divulge his visit to Anantpur to the Gujarati devotees, since the devotees in Jamnagar got his Darshan after conclusion of the 'Kashta-Moun' Upasana with a 2 years growth of beard, as we saw in the previous chapter.

It is no wonder that a Siddha Yogi like Gurudev can create a second personality by his knowledge of the basic elements of the universe, to please his true devotees.

* * *

Saintly lives are for well being of all

Chapter – 38

Mathuradasbhai's wife Valima was suffering from severe Chronic Asthma, all day round. At times her breathing was so laboured that she appeared on the verge of death.

Though blessed with all the worldly things, yet due to her illness, she could hardly eat anything; Jamnadasbhai's wife Godavriben was pained by Valima's illness and suggested that her suffering should be brought to Gurudev's notice when he came next to Jamnagar. She affirmed that "Such saints have miraculous powers to cure and their mere word could work wonders."

Valima liked the idea and told Mathuradasbhai to write a note to Gurudev for cure of her illness. It was customary among devotees to write such notes to him, who would first keep them under his pillow, then read at leisure carefully and then after a while tear them off with a smile.

Some of the devotees asked for such cures while others sought solutions for their knotty problems. The devotees believed him to be the 'Kalp-Taru' (Heavenly-tree of wish fulfillment), in human form; Mathuradasbhai disagreed and told his wife "Influence of such divine persons should only be used for our spiritual uplift and these personal misfortunes and illnesses are meant to be borne by us with fortitude."

Thus disappointed Valima got her son Bharat to write the note, and Bharat wrote to Gurudev in faltering hand writing and childlike simplicity "Bapuji ! my Ma is suffering from high Blood pressure and asthma, please cure her."

During his next visit to Jamnagar Gurudev had gone to Gangavav along with Mathuradasbhai and other devotees. Over there they visited an ashram and Shiv temple, offered their pranam and chanted Ram-Dhun for a while

Little Bharat happened to be with them and through he was eager to hand over the note to Gurudev he felt shy for it. Mathuradasbhai

said "Bapu ! Bharat wishes to give a note" Gurudev smiled and said "Let me have it, I was wondering why he has not given the note so far." He accepted the note, took a glance, and tore it off with a smile and told Bharat "Now convey my message to your Ma, tell her, your blood pressure and asthma shall be no more."

On account of his lifelong devotion to truth, and with the blessings thus put into speech, Valima is now perfectly free from all her illnesses and has no restrictions on her diet. Now she is able to undertake car journeys of 500 miles at a stretch along dusty roads without suffering from asthma.

* * *

From Jamnagar, Poojyashri went to Rajkot, which was in the grip of an acute scarcity of water due to delayed rains. The yagna done to propitiate Rain Gods, at Panchnath had not yielded any results.

Gurudev ordered a continuous 'Sankirtan' of 'Ram-Nam', which was promptly obeyed under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Bedlawala.

Within a few hours, torrential rains began and people were extremely grateful for his divine intervention.

However Gurudev said in all humility "I have done nothing, your faith and the Panchnath yagna performed by the Brahmins have brought on the rains."

* * *

When the rains continued incessantly for a few days without any break, the worried devotees approached Gurudev with these words "Bapu, if such heavy rains continue, our routine of 'Sankirtan' will be breached."

Gurudev smiled and glancing at Haricharandasji replied "Well, in that case, something will have to be done."

Both of them went inside a room and recited some 'Mantras' and Hanuman Bahuk. Gradually the wind swept away the rain clouds, the rains first slackened and then ceased totally.

The incident inspires us and reminds as about the infinite grace benevolence of Gurudev.

* * *

Little Bharat happened to be with them and though he was eager to hand over the note to Gurudev he felt shy about it. Mathuradasbhai sa

From Rajkot, Gurudev went to Vartej, via Bhavnagar, and he stayed in Vartej for 2 months, observing solitude and 'Moun' except for occasional short duration, when he used to come out to give Darshan and short discourses to Devotees.

The planning for the next eye camp a Guna was done here, shri Laljibhai of Jamnagar had undertaken to bear all expenses of the camp.

The name of Laljibhai's wife was synonymous with the Gujarati name for cornea of the eye 'Tara Eye Camp.' The 'Regd. Trust' till to date conducts regular eye camps.

Truly,

"all things work good for them, that love God"

* * *

The Guna Eye Camp**Chapter – 39**

For this camp Dr. Krishnakumari was to be in charge of management, while Dr. Chhabilbhai was to be the Hon. Secretary.

In the beginning, there were several hitches. Though the date given to the patients was nearing, the villagers who had agreed to volunteer were nowhere in sight and consequently proper arrangements for the camp could not be completed.

Unlike Chitrakoot, where the villagers gave whole hearted co-operation, such enthusiasm seemed to be lacking here.

The devotees who had come as volunteers were losing hopes but Poojyashri told them "If we are unable to achieve results, before going, we shall leave the medicines brought for this purpose, in drywell, but from our side, there should be no lack of efforts and hope." He further added "Even now, I am quite confident that efforts made with faith are bound to succeed."

Had he so desired, Gurudev by his siddhis, could have procured all sorts of amenities yet he wanted to set an example for his devotees that to serve the poor and the needy with body, mind and intellect, their own efforts were of supreme importance. Through such instances he wished his devotees to face all obstacles with courage and fortitude.

Shri Pragjibhai used to go to surrounding villages on a cycle and distribute handbills about the proposed eye camp, at times he would lose his way in dense forest but on chanting Gurudev's name with faith, he would get back on the right path.

Occasionally Gurudev himself used to go to the villages in a car and distribute the handbills and speak to the people and the driver would stick the handbills on the village walls.

Finally feeling guilty about their inaction, people did come to help and the camp was built up as scheduled. It was indeed a victory of faith and fortitude over doubt and lethargy. The operations were commenced on 9-11-1956 and Doctors Joshi, Zaveri and Dave gave their services.

It was customary in every eye camp, to give a badge to volunteers with Gurudev's photo, and date and place of eye camp to distinguish them from others. Here Gurudev himself pinned the first badge to Omkarbhai and made him take an oath of voluntary service whereby he would not hesitate even to clean toilet of patients.

Omkarbhai honoured the promise and with Gurudev's blessings completed all the tasks entrusted to him with success. These included bringing grains, vegetables, milk and other provisions from villages like Bajranggarh as far away as 6 miles

In the extreme cold of Guna, the volunteers ensured that the patients were properly bedded on coir mattresses and at times they had to spread additional Hessian cloth over them to keep them warm.

Poojyashri was staying about a furlong away from the camp, he used to take a round of the camp, even in the biting cold at night to supervise all the arrangements.

Most of the volunteers had to be accommodated in the tents in the open. They bore the cold and the hardship with patience and fortitude. At night the patients were served with milk and 'Khichri' in metal bowls and at times volunteers had to cleanse the vessels after the patients had their meals, yet they did all their work cheerfully.

On certain occasions some of the ignorant patients would try to take along by stealth a bedspread or a quilt. Every patient had been instructed in advance to leave behind all materials given to them in the camp. However, when this misbehavior of some of the patients was brought to Gurudev's notice, he gave strict instructions not to search the departing patient's belongings.

On 25-11-1956, the camp concluded with a tally of 1325 operations and on the last day Poojyashri addressed the visitors and volunteers in these words :-

"All concerned have extended their unstinted and whole hearted co-operation. Many have come to serve in the camp from far away places and I hope that the local people will continue to co-operate with them. When man truly becomes human, good inclination is bound to elevate his

conscience. Always remember that the one who does not work for alleviation of sufferings of others is not fit to be called a human being."

Chhitarmalji, a merchant of Guna, had served whole heartedly in the Camp. Some one told Gurudev that Chhitarmuaji had no issue. Now with Poojyshri's blessings, his house resounds with patter of children's feet.

*"With man this is impossible,
But with God all things are possible"*

* * *

Miracles of Ram-Nam

Chapter -40

After the Guna camp, Gurudev started for Anantpur by car with Thakorebhai, who was driving. The visibility was poor due to darkness and the road was dusty. Gurudev told Thakorebhai to follow the red tail light of the truck that was ahead of them, and drive carefully.

It so happened that absent minded Thakorebhai did not realize that the truck with the 'Red' warning lamp had already gone elsewhere and he was mistakenly driving towards the red lamp put on the road as 'stop' signal and diversion.

When he realized his mistake and saw the danger signal, his hands flew up from the steering wheel involuntarily with the words "He-Ram", because there was no time left to apply the brakes and stop the car. Suddenly, as if on its own, the car's steering wheel turned left and the vehicle veered towards the diversion road and came to a sudden halt with a thud.

Poojyashri got down, examined all the wheels and told Thakorebhai "Nothing has happened, let us drive ahead."

Thakorebhai, who was still in a shock asked "How did the steering turn on its own towards the left and on the diversion?" Gurudev replied with a smile "You uttered the name of 'Ram', he came to our rescue and turned the steering, let us first get over this diversion. You better drive slowly behind me while I will walk ahead of you till we get back on the main road."

With trembling heart, Thakorebhai did as instructed. However, on the main road his visibility was further impaired by the thick fog that enveloped the car. Amidst this fog and darkness, Thakorebhai drove upto Anantpur, all the while praying mentally to Gurudev for their safe journey.

After staying for a few days in Anantpur, they started on their onward journey to Pushkar. Once again problems arose, both the horn and the brakes of the car became defective. Thakorebhai in his simple

way told Gurudev "We cannot drive with such a defective vehicle, it is unlawful and the police may arrest me."

Gurudev told him confidently "Do not worry, drive on as I instruct. On the road to Pushkar, when we reach the incline on the road, stop feeding petrol to the car engine and keep on driving slowly." Thus they reached Pushkar without brake or horn.

This incident demonstrates us how the benign grace of God descends on saintly Mahatmas like Gurudev to perform such miracles.

In his infinite kindness God saves and protects his true devotees so that people like us can understand the true value of his greatness and devotion unto him.

Thakorebhai, who experienced all this at first hand, was indeed overcome with divine pleasure and thankfulness.

Truly,

*The effectual fervent prayers of a
Righteous man, availeth much"*

* * *

Benign grace on former wrong doers

Chapter - 41

A Bania youth of Bombay, during an insane fit of rage became instrumental in killing his wife.

For this grave offence, he was arrested by the police and despite all the efforts of his father who was a well known and able lawyer, he was sentenced to life (i.e. 20 years) imprisonment.

The father, happened to be a close relative of Keshubhai, one of Gurudev's devotees and knowing Keshubhai's firm faith and devotion unto Gurudev, he approached Keshubhai and said "If Bapu bestows his grace on my unfortunate son, his life can be saved from ruin."

When Gurudev next visited Bombay, at an appropriate time, Keshubhai narrated the whole story and said, "Bapu, with your kind intercession the youth can be saved." In a firm voice Gurudev replied "Whatever has happened so far is for the good and what happens next will also be for the good."

After some time, when Keshubhai reminded him of the matter, Gurudev asked "How many years sentence is pronounced by the court?" When he was told "20 years, he asked "Since how many months has the youth been in jail?" The reply given was "5 months."

After some thought Gurudev said, "The years can be made into mere months, the youth lacks any meritorious act to redeem this grave act but he will be released after another 15 months." He can be released even now but to atone for his heinous act, he will not be able to eat even one grain of food during the rest of his life."

Keshubhai talked to the youth's family, the father could not believe that his son could get off so lightly with only 15 months, yet using his legal skills, he appealed to the High Court.

When Keshubhai went to the Guna eye camp, Gurudev asked him, "The appeal is pending before the High Court and you are here?"

Keshubhai asked with humility "If you so order, I can return by next train."

Gurudev said "No need for that, since you are already here, be of service to the poor and the needy and God will do the rest."

Before High Court's official verdict was known Gurudev said "The High Court has confirmed session court's decision."

Keshubhai was astonished but merely said "All that is for you to take care of Bapu, I have confidence in your words that the youth will be released after 15 months."

Gurudev reaffirmed his earlier words "Of course, God is merciful."

After a few days the High Court's official verdict confirmed what Gurudev had already said, now the only resort was an appeal to the Supreme Court.

When Keshubhai was retuning to Bombay from Guna, Gurudev told him "Do not worry, leave every thing to the mercy of shri Ram."

Another 4 months passed and the parents brought the boy home on parole, pending appeal.

When Keshubhai informed Gurudev about this, he said "If he is kept out on parole, that many number of days, will be added to his 15 months of imprisonment."

The boy was on parole for 45 days. At last the 3 judge bench of Supreme Court opined. "Due to lack of sufficient evidence, we believe the youth to be not guilty and order his release."

After undergoing imprisonment for 15 months plus forty five days on parole, the youth returned home, neither a day less nor a day more."

The parents took the youth to Gurudev for Darshan and after prostrating themselves at his feet, they wept tears of gratitude.

Gurudev told the youth "This much imprisonment was a must, otherwise a greater harm would have befallen you. Now go and enjoy yourself but live strictly as per dictates of religion, be kind to all and remember, one may escape the clutches of the law but one can never escape the retribution of the Lord's Court. Have fear of God and start your life afresh."

Keshubhai said "Bapu, by your grace alone, the boy has regained his freedom and come for your Darshan"

Gurudev replied with humility "I have done nothing, it was result of your faith and firm resolve."

This was Gurudev's standard reply whenever any devotee got any difficult task accomplished by his grace and blessings.

Truly one on whom mere grace of God descends, may get riches or fulfillment of mere wishes but one, whom God considers his own, to him alone he gives such saintly humility. Poojyashri never for a moment relinquished this divine quality of humility..

As though he said :-

*"If thou worshipeth the Lord, Though your sins be as Scarlet,
They shall be as white as the driven snow"*

* * *

Bilaspur Eye Camp**Chapter – 42**

On 12-2-1957, the 3rd camp commenced at Bilaspur. Compared to the last two camps, things were moving smoothly because by now the devotees and the volunteers were accustomed to bear hardship.

At around 3-00 a.m. Gurudev would go to the store, wake-up the store-in-charge and when the stove was lighted, he would himself start the tea for devotees and volunteers.

By the time the tea kettle came to a boil, all the volunteers would be woken up, and after having their tea they would be ready for their duties.

Pragjibhai and Babubhai would first start off the noon meal and then go around the camp with a stick and torch. Once while on their early morning round, they saw a black shadow at some distance, they threw the light at it and ordered the person to stop.

When they ran and caught up with the shadow they found that it was Gurudev in person.

He told them jokingly "I was testing your security arrangements."

Harshadbhai was in charge of the inquiry office, and like other devotees, Gurudev took personal interest in his well being. Every morning when he came to Gurudev for pranam, he would be given a handful of 'Shakkar Para' and 'Chiwda'. This personal touch moved Harshadbhai so much that he would be ready to do anything for Gurudev like a child obeying his parents.

Once during his early morning round, Gurudev found Harshadbhai still asleep and playfully he removed the mouth piece of the microphone kept there for making announcements. Next day when he went to meet Gurudev Harshadbhai was very much upset by this loss.

Gurudev asked him "Harshad ! How can the mike be stolen, when you claim to remain awake for the whole night?" Harshadbhai asked for forgiveness for this lapse and this news of Gurudev's nightly vigil over

them, spread throughout the camp and the volunteers became more alert in their duties.

In the community kitchen, Gurudev used to lend a helping hand occasionally to demonstrate to others the dignity of labour and of physical service.

Every night Vaishnavdasji took instructions from Gurudev regarding next day's cooking programme. Gurudev, before deciding about quantity of food to be prepared would ask about that day's surplus and to avoid wastage he would instruct him to prepare less accordingly.

It was customary to serve, "Shira" to patients for 3 days after operation. When additional patients were operated upon, the kitchen-in-charge asked for permission to prepare more, but Gurudev replied "No, Cook a little less."

Strangely with his 'Anna Poorna' shakti Gurudev could manage with lesser quantity of "Shira" while the number of patients increased.

In similar manner, wherever Gurudev undertook works of social welfare, the Goddess of food 'Devi Anna Poorna' would go their to supplement human provisions and make the undertaking a total success.

Once, during the camp, sudden heavy torrential rains interrupted the work. Volunteers were running around to shift patients from open tents to permanent structures.

At once, Gurudev came out from his room and shaking his cloth all around said "What is all this ?" In a little while the rains stopped as it had started as if on his orders.

Omkarbhair, who had gone out of the camp and returned next day, reported that excepting the camp site, the entire Bilaspur region had incessant heavy rains and on account of the same his truck bearing firewood had to struggle for several hours to reach the camp.

Thus we see that though Gurudev never used his powers to perform miracles for cheap publicity, yet he would not hesitate to use them for protecting the welfare of the people.

With 2791 operations, the camp concluded on 24-2-1957.

* * *

Gurudev's Humility and Service of the unfortunate**Chapter – 43**

After Bilaspur camp, the devotees and Poojyashri went on pilgrimage to Jagannathpuri. While they were there, for all the five days, 'Sadhu Bhojan' and dinner for the poor and the needy were organized.

There were many unfortunate people in the town, who were afflicted by Leprosy.

They would come in large numbers, while the food available, was limited in quantity. However, Gurudev told the volunteers to cover the food containers with a thin cloth and then he spread over it his hands in blessings. It appeared as though (with these blessings) Devi "Anna Poorna" made these containers of food inexhaustible, whatever be the number of diners.

One of the diners was not satisfied inspite of having been served with several helpings of vegetables. Gurudev came along and emptied the entire 'Kamandalu' in his plate, he was at once satisfied. Poojyashri said "We have to keep on serving till the Diner is satisfied."

After the 'Bhandara', sitting under a tree, Gurudev addressed the devotees "Be kind and compassionate towards these unfortunate people and pray to God that you may never be tempted to do such evil deeds that it may bring upon you the resultant punishment and suffering that these people are undergoing.

On the last day of their stay all the Mahatmas were given gift of clothes and cash.

* * *

From there, at the persuasion of Bhimji Bapa, they went to Calcutta, and they were camping in a forest in Dakshineswar. They visited the Ashram of Swami shri 'Ramkrishna Paramhans.'

His room contained a cot and a mattress littered with flowers, the mild and pleasant scent of the burning incense was permeating the room, reminding all that the saintly lives are for sacrificing themselves like

the burning 'Agarbatti' for public welfare. The walls were lined with pictures depicting various incidents in swamiji's life.

Poojyashri remarked softly "Paramhansji had the 'Darshan' and 'Samadhi' in this very room, for him attainment of Samadhi stage was just as easy and natural like switching 'On' and 'Off' of a lamp."

When some devotees showed him photos of Swamiji and Vivekanandji he responded with a smile "I have seen them and spoken with them often and at length."

From Calcutta, the group went to Ayodhya via Jharia. Poojyashri stayed in the camp of shri Tapaswiji. Later, after sending all others to their lodgings he told Haricharandasji "Come along with me and just quietly observe whatever happens, do not interrupt."

In Khak chowk, Poojyashri did a strange thing. Unknown to any one and without revealing his identity, he sat among the group of Mahatmas who were gathered there in the chowk. The local Mahant asked Gurudev "Mahatma, where do you come from?" He replied, "I have come from Chitrakoot along with the Mahantji of Gondal shri Haricharandasji." Thus impressed by the title of Mahant, the local Mahant reverently requested Haricharandasji to come and sit near him, instead of on the ground.

His second question to Gurudev was "While in Chitrakoot, where do you stay?" Without revealing his identity Poojyashri replied truthfully "I stay at Jankikund in Paramhansji's Ashram." Thus being led on, the Mahant said "O Lord! I have been there, Paramhansji has not left the work of management in competent hands, there is no adequate arrangement for fire wood and water for the visitors."

Meanwhile another sadhu came along and offered his reverential pranam to Gurudev and asked with surprise "Why are you sitting on the ground?"

The surprised Mahant asked the newcomer "Who is he?" The sadhu replied "Strange that you could not recognize him, he is himself the Paramhansji of Jankikund."

Gurudev told the sadhu "You have spoilt all the fun and games; I was listening to praises of our Ashram."

The bashful Mahanta asked for forgiveness and offered his pranam to Gurudev.

At the time of departure Poojyashri gave handsome gift of cash and then went over to Maniramji's Ashram.

From Ayodhya they went to Chitrakoot.

Truly,

"the devout deviseth devotional things"

* * *

Miraculous Cure of Cancer

Chapter – 44

In 1957, Dinubahi's wife Jayaben got severe pain on the right side of her throat. Within 15 days a tumour like swelling appeared and the throat was so constricted that she could hardly swallow 6 to 8 ounces of water per day.

Her weight was down to 71 pounds.

In Tata Hospital, it was diagnosed as cancer and the operation of the same was considered very risky.

After the diagnosis, Dinubhai wired to Gurudev at Chitrakoot "There is no chance for Jaya's survival, if you kindly permit, I would like to bring her to Chitrakoot for your Darshan." Gurudev promptly sent a reply "Jaya does not have cancer, even if it is cancer, I am it's Censor."

On receiving permission, Dinubhai reached Chitrakoot at 11-00 p.m. in the night.

Poojyashri took Jayaben and all others to his cave. Where a coal stove was burning. He examined Jayaben's throat with a torch and said "Jaya, your cancer has gone" and told Dinubhai to take her temperature. This was found to be above 104° F.

Gurudev told them, "Let Jaya be rested for the night. After sunrise tomorrow, take her to river Mandakini and let her sit in the water in such a position that her tumour is immersed in water, Ma Ganga will wash away her tumour along with all her sins."

Dinubhai tried to protest "But Bapu, immersion in cold water with such high fever?" Gurudev said "Do as I tell you, now the entire responsibility is mine."

As directed, Jayaben was taken to the river everyday and made to sit as instructed. Slowly both the fever and the tumor receded. After the bath she was taken to the temple for Darshan and then to Gurudev for daily pranam and then she would sip the milk sent by Gurudev.

Finally when she was returning to normal, Poojyashri himself cooked dinner for Jayaben who was in rapturous joy. Gurudev said "Stay for another 8 days and leave only when you are able to chew beetle nut."

After 8 days, Gurudev himself gave a piece of beetle nut to Jayaben as promised. Due to grace of Gurudev, the incurable and grave disease like cancer got cured. Today (At the time of 1st Gujarati edition) after 14 years Jayaben is hale and hearty.

* * *

After Ram-Navmi celebrations at Chitrakoot, Gurudev, along with Saints and Mahatmas went to the Kumbha congregation at Ujjain. There under his supervision, Bhandara was organized for a whole month and nearly 6000 Mahatmas used to come for the 'Prasad'. On the 'Poornahuti' day, the Mahatmas were given gifts of cash and clothes.

* * *

After the 'Kumbha', Gurudev desirous of peace and solitude, stayed in a small village called Binaganj.

The place being remote and small, people did not recognize him and he used to get the much needed rest away from crowds of adoring devotees.

He used to sit near the village well with a few indigenous medicines and give them to the simple villagers having some illness.

When people got a surefire cure, they started flocking to him in large numbers from adjacent villages also. Someone recognized him as the same Babaji, who had organized the Guna eye camp.

Now, thus getting once again crowded, he entrusted the work of dispensing medicines to Chanduben and retreated to his Kutir for solitude.

Guru Poornima of that year was celebrated with organization of 'Bhandara' in that village.

In Binaganj, they have kept a photo of Gurudev in the room where he used to stay, devotees offer their reverential pranam before the photograph.

* * *

Mandsour Eye – Camp

Chapter – 45

With the first operation performed on 29-10-1957, the fourth eye-camp commenced at Mandsour. In the book containing list of patients, Gurudev wrote "It is my prime belief that selfless service never goes in vain."

Milk used to be brought from nearby villages for use of patients. One day the same was delayed.

The patients kept on asking for milk to Parvatiben, who was incharge of the female ward. Since nutritious milk was essential for freshly operated patients, Parvatiben approached Pragjibhai who was in charge of the male ward. He went to the 'Tea House' but could obtain only half a bucketful, that was left over from the morning tea. Seeing the meagre quantity, Parvatiben expressed her annoyance "How can I manage with so little milk for about 70 patients, who were operated upon today?"

Pragjibhai replied, "Ben, have faith and with Gurudev's name. Take up the feeding jar and commenece, meanwhile, I will see what can be done."

Though Parvatiben did not understand much, she commenced with an old lady, who took just one sip and said "Enough."

Thus all the patients whom she approached with the milk kettle just took a sip and said "Enough."

When Parvatiben glanced at the milk bucket, she was pleasantly surprised to see that it still contained some milk.

Amidst joyous celebration, the camp concluded on 11-11-1957, with a tally of 2059 operations. The Chief Minister of M.P. Shri Kailashnath Katju was of immense help during the camp.

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The Sironj Eye Camp**Chapter – 46**

On conclusion of the camp of Mandisor, Gurudev told the devotees to return home and said "I may, go elsewhere for rest and solitude."

However, he went straight to Sironj, where Avantibai's son-in-law was staying, and on account of that, Gurudev was known to the people.

While sitting under a mango tree, outside the village, he spoke to the villagers about an eye camp. He told every one that they would have such a camp exactly after one month.

One devotee, Shri Radhavallabhji suggested "Babaji, let us have this camp around April – May so that we can provide mangoes for the patients."

Gurudev smiled and said "Bhai, we can not have an eye camp in summer, so far as your mangoes are concerned, there they are go and pluck them", and he pointed towards a bunch of three ripe mangoes hanging from the tree.

Mangoes in this cold ? Seeing such a strange phenomena, even the muslims among those present agreed to participate and assist in the camp.

On 13-1-1958, when the first operation was performed, Gurudev wrote in the register of patients "The key to success lies in concern for others."

On account of Sironj, formerly being under the rule of a muslim Nawab, majority of people were muslims, The purda system among the women was an obstacle for them to come forward for treatment or assistance.

However, some muslims came for checkup and operation. One devotee remarked "Why do you treat the muslims?" Gurudev replied with a smile, "In the camp I am only a human being, though in my personal life I am a strict Hindu."

He added further "all this discrimination of caste and class is restricted only to the body. Humanity has neither form nor caste. It is not proper to distinguish one human patient from another.

On successful completion of the camp, Gurudev reverentially attended both the Satyanarayan Pooja, organized by the Hindus as well as the mushaira (Congregation of poets) organized by the muslims.

Next day, while the camp was being dispersed, one muslim leader addressed his fellow muslim volunteers thus "Chant 'Ram-Ram' while helping to lift the luggage. An angel of Khuda has organized this camp. Both Ram and Rahim are same."

We see here what true and selfless devotion can do to the thinking of people of other religions.

Truly it has been said :-

"True love conquers all"

On 28-1-1958, the eye-camp concluded with a total of 968 operations.

* * *

Ramesh escapes death.**Chapter – 47**

When Rameshbhai of Anantpur showed his horoscope to an astrologer, he said “Your destiny is excellent but in the 28th year of your life there is a grave calamity which may result in your death.”

He told about this dire prediction to Gurudev, who was annoyed with Ramesh for inviting worries by consulting an astrologer. He took away the horoscope and kept it with him.

While Ramesh was passing through his 28th year, Gurudev happened to be in Anantpur. On that night, a snake descended from the roof of the room in which Ramesh was sleeping and coiled itself around his neck. In the morning, when his roommate saw the snake, still coiled around the neck of Rameshbhai, he got scared and shouted for help.

Ramesh, on hearing the shrill sounds woke up and was scared while the snake left the room through the roof. Ramesh ran to Gurudev and said “Mamaji please help me, my throat is burning severely, a snake remained coiled around my neck right through the night.”

Gurudev gave him a seat near him and said lovingly “Son, snakes are ornaments around Lord Shiva’s throat, now my worries about your future are over, after this incident, none can kill you even by stones, now go ahead, get married and enjoy the rest of your life.”

For the inflammation and skin irritation around the throat, Gurudev gave him some medicine. Thus the serpent, who had come to bite Rameshbhai, had his mouth, as though stitched up by Gurudev’s grace and Rameshbhai escaped its bite and sure death.

“If God be for us, who can be against us ?”

* * *

Jagdalpur Eye camp

Chapter – 48

After Sironj, it was decided to hold the camp at Jagdalpur, which is about 200 miles from Raipur station and on the border of Orissa.

The adivasis here are of dark complexion and scantily clad and earn their livelihood by hunting with bows and arrows. They are accustomed to a crude diet. The devotees were amazed at their primitive habits and dietary preferences.

On account of their ignorance of the language spoken by the volunteers, the devotees found it difficult to communicate with them.

Pragibhai and Danabhai would go around the villages explaining in sign language that a saint had come among them to correct their eye sights by 'Mantra-Tantra' and he would also give them food, they added as a further incentive.

After a lot of persuasion, a few people agreed to come for treatment.

The operation were commenced on 10-3-1958. In each camp there used to be a separate ward for mental patients. Here too there was such a ward. One night an insane patient created big trouble.

When he was tied to a cot to prevent him from hurting his own freshly operated eyes, Gurudev entered the mental ward and said "He is an addict and needs opium, let some one go and fetch a little to pacify him." Meanwhile the disturbed patient was given a cup of tea, he took a sip and spat it out towards Gurudev.

Finally when opium was obtained, the insane addict was given a little, and thus pacified, he at last went to sleep.

On the day of concluding ceremony, some Christian missionary nuns came to Gurudev and left after having Darshan.

This area, like all our backward areas, was a favourite ground for conversion to Christianity.

Gurudev told that he had purposely organized the camp in this area to counter this influence of conversion because it was harmful to Hinduism.

He said, "For conversion of these backward brethren of ours to Christianity we alone are responsible because initially we have neglected them. No one wishes to come and work in these remote place. But after conversion to Christianity and obtaining higher education, when the self same adivasi becomes an officer we respect him.

Therefore it is our duty to provide relief and succour for these unfortunate people in the form of food, clothing, medicines and proper opportunities for education. This is the only way to guard our ancient religion and culture."

A total of 1658 operations were performed in Jagdalpur camp.

* * *

Initiation of Jasabhai

Chapter – 49

In Jasabhai's life, there was no scope for anything else except the game of football. On the other hand, his best friend Ravjibhai liked the company of religiously inclined people and occasionally he took Jasabhai along with him to listen to 'Bhajans' etc.

Once, when he had thus accompanied Ravjibhai merely out of idle curiosity, the atmosphere of total serenity and peace that he found there cast a spell on Jasabhai's mind. His visits to Bhajan Mandlis increased and at times he felt so attached to such places that he would be reluctant to return home.

Finally both the friends resolved to obtain formal 'Diksha' from a well known and acknowledged saint.

To select the name of their future 'Guru', both wrote names of 3 different saints on pieces of paper which he had picked up out of the three pieces. The name of Ranchhoddasji Maharaj was written there.

He rushed to the house of Ravjibhai who was also to undertake similar exercise simultaneously at his place. Before Jasabhai could utter a word, Ravjibhai showed him, the piece of paper drawn by him from among three names, and thereon was the selfsame name of Poojayashri.

The friends embraced with joy and decided to obtain 'Kanthi' from Gurudev, and they believed that if their decision had the divine sanction, their Gurudev would come to Rajkot within 8 days.

Exactly on the 8th day, Poojayashri reached Rajkot and on hearing this, both of them ran onward his Ashram.

Before they could utter a word, Gurudev said "So you have come, let us meet at 8-00 a.m. tomorrow.

Now both were overcome with joy at the thought that "Bapu knew everything". After formally tying the 'Kanthi' Poojayashri advised "Do one mala of 'Shri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram' every day, treat all other like mothers, and treat your parents as Gurus, be consistent and regular in your religious routine, never let the 'Kanthi' away from your

neck. Shri Ram is your chosen deity, worship him at all times. Lead a simple life and do not accumulate wealth beyond your needs."

He added "The rules of 'Diksha' are difficult to follow, yet I do not wish to see my disciples ignoring the right percepts, because a Guru who overlooks and condones the shortcomings of his disciples is virtually blind. After one year, I will give you the supreme Mantra."

When Gurudev came again, after year, after ceremonial 'Havan', they were given the 'Mantra Raj'.

Jasabhai says "Gurudev showered his benign grace on me and despite my atheist way of life, made me full of faith and firm religious belief and therefore I prostrate myself unto his divine self."

* * *

My first meeting with Gurudev

Chapter – 50

On the sacred day of 'Dev Diwali' on 20-11-1958, I was awaiting Gurudev's arrival on the platform at Bombay Central Station. It was around 2-00 p.m. And my eagerness knew no bounds as I waited for his arrival with rose flowers, wrapped in green leaves to protect them from being withered. Since time passed very slowly when one is waiting with expectation, I glanced around and saw hundreds of people, each busy in his own way.

As the train approached, I felt myself turning inwards and the picture of Gurudev started taking shape in my vivid imagination.

While I was looking ahead, Poojyashri alighted from the train. Even from such a distance I felt myself spell bound, Is this the same Greatman ? What a lustrous face, about 5' -3" in height, with coppery skin, leaning slightly forward, with a frail body and magnetic personality.

He was attired in a white Dhoti, half jacket, and a pair of chappals and had a kerchief in his hand.

As if representing his saintly personality, every thing on him was spotlessly white. There played on his compassionate face a winning smile, lighting up his personality and face. It appeared to me that his eyes could convey messages of love and adoration even through the glasses on this face.

Can a man have the capacity to radiate so much sweetness and divine love through a mere smile ?

The devotees rushed towards him. With garlands draped around his neck. He would speak a few words to one, put a fond hand on another's head or merely with a glance acknowledge the presence of some others.

As though the flowers in my hands were impatient to be offered at his feet, my doubting mind started wondering. How will I ever be able to approach him amidst this unprecedented crowd of devotees ?

Will my flowers be able to reach his sacred feet ? Thus I oscillated alternately between hope, doubt and despair.

Before my mind could go any further, Gurudev saw me and making his way through the dense crowd, he came and stood right in front of me.

The flowers finally reached their destination as I bowed my head in reverence at his feet.

I thought, such a benign personality should have the adjective 'Antaryami' (one who knows another's mind).

He was scheduled to stay overnight at Ram Mahal and then leave for Shivani eye camp on the next day. While at the station, I had heard that to work as Doctors, Nurses and service minded devotees, volunteers were being enrolled for the eye camp, and they were to catch the train for Shivani next day.

I had an irrepressible urge to attend the eye camp and after obtaining permission from Bapuji I joined the group of devotees going to Shivani.

* * *

Shivani Eye Camp

Chapter - 51

Shivani is 80 miles from Nagpur station, where the volunteers had come to receive us with vehicles for our onward journey. All of them seemed to be old acquaintances except me and I felt as though they stared at me as a stranger. I looked aside in confusion.

On the next day at 5-00 a.m. early in the morning, Poojyashri reached the camp and with eagerness and enthusiasm, I too went for Darshan.

He was seated on a coir mattress spread on a wooden cot. Due to extreme cold, in addition to his normal attire he had put on a light brown shawl and similar cap. The devotees would offer paranam one by one, and he would say a few words to each one.

At my turn, I approached and offered my reverential pranam, but he did not even glance in my direction. I was choked with frustration and tears welled up in my eyes.

On getting out of the room, I wondered "Why have I come here?" Should I return to Bombay forthwith?" Yet something held me back. With supreme efforts I held back my tears and took a round of the camp. All around I saw different structures made of Bamboo chips and Hessian cloth.

The camp had four different types of kitchen with cloth banners bearing their names. "For the Mahatmas", "The patient," "Gujarati kitchen" and "for the Doctors".

In the open, right in the middle of 8 wards, a few chairs and tables were kept, with medical kit for nurses and volunteers. In one corner there stood a brass water container, with drinking water for patients.

A little distance away there was a shack with the board 'Tea House' and the warm aroma of boiling tea leaves was enough to dissipate the cold.

The provision store contained quilts and blankets and in the grain store, there were sacks full of wheat, rice, containers of ghee, edible oils and other provisions. Right in the centre of the store was a cot covered with coir mattress, obviously for Gurudev to sit there when he paid a visit to issue instructions.

Outside the compound and at the entrance, there was an inquiry office with telephone and postal facilities.

At 9-00 a.m. sharp, in the presence of Gurudev, the Doctors started examining patients.

Dr. Chhabilbhai, Drs. Joglekar, Zaveri, Joshi and Dave were encircled by the patients.

Those admitted were given Green, Yellow and Pink badges to wear around the neck according to the type of eye disorder that was to be treated, with their names, addresses and also with Ward, Cot and line number.

The diagnostic centre was crowded yet the work of examination proceeded with speed and precision. Seeing the sorry plight of patients, I was drawn nearer but was promptly repelled by their smelly bodies and mouths and I stepped back.

Suddenly a partially blind old lady stumbled, lost her stick and collided with my back. She caught hold of me for support and narrated her sorry plight of having been separated from the group from her village. She said she was lonely and helpless and she had no one to turn to. Her tears of anguish, brought about a change in my mindset.

It was as though Lord Narayana, in the guise of this poor helpless lady was testing me and thus far, I had failed in the rest.

Seeing the green card on the old lady's neck, indicatig a cataract patient, profoundly repentant of my mistake, I slowly led her to the que of similar patients to be admitted to that particular ward.

Throughout that day, I did similar work and it gave me immense joy and peace of mind to be of real service to the needy. In the night, I slept peacefully, resolving not to go to 'Guru Mandir', the next day. With great efforts I had overcome my inborn scepticism about saints and Mahatmas and had placed my faith in this one, who acted as though he

totally rebuffed my faith and devotion. My ego was hurt and damaged beyond repair, yet on the next day, involuntarily my steps turned towards 'Guru-Mandir'. But suddenly I halted at the door with hesitation.

Poojyashri smilingly called me to him with the words "Your name must be Damyanti, Valjibhai told me in Bombay that his daughter had gone to Shivani as volunteer and that I should look after her". Now I gathered courage enough to advance further inside the room while Gurudev added "Listen, are you quite comfortable? If you have any difficulty, you may come to me at any time you wish. Now take this" So saying he gave me as 'prasad' a handful of cashews, which I accepted and offered pranam and ran to my quarters with tearful eyes. These were not mere empty words from Gurudev but an antidote to my mental anguish of yesterday.

My racing mind conjured up questions and answers like "Why did he express so much concern and love, and what was expected from me because in my limited experience so far I had not come across love without reciprocal expectation. I also gave the replies "Of course the kindness is for yesterday's act of ignoring me, what else?" The frivolous mind wandered once again "Was yesterday's rebuff true? Or was today's compassion true?" Finally my faith spoke out "The seeming indifference was for due atonement for past scepticism about saints and by way of punishment for past misdeeds. Such a divine and kind saint can never be cruel to anyone, even their apparent harshness would be for the ultimate good of the disciples."

The proper analogy here would be that a doctor would never harm his patient, even if he cuts up the patient's stomach to remove some defective part, he would stitch up the same with loving care and caution. By such introspection, I regained my peace of mind, totally and completely.

So far, during the past 18 years of my life, I had come across mere pretense, hypocrisy, and a vacuous mentality to get entertained by movies, dramas and parties. In this place, such things were totally absent.

There was a tendency to see and feel the presence of God in all beings. The entire atmosphere was permeated by the presence of one Super human, whose desire was to make everyone practice the dictum "Good deeds alone are akin to Godliness." Though the entire camp was at his command, yet it was a matter of pleasant surprise to me that Gurudev could take all his love, devotion, respect and reverence in his stride without the slightest feeling of Ego in his thoughts or actions.

On the appointed day, at 9-00 a.m., Poojyashri came to the operation theater. One by one, all the Doctors garlanded him and offered their pranam and placing his hands on the head of each by way of blessing, he wished them success in all their operation.

After that, a prayer, praising the almighty and the Guru was recited with an invocation to God to make all being happy, healthy and capable of good deeds at all times.

Dr. Joshi performed the first operation in $2\frac{1}{2}$ minutes and placed the cataract in Gurudev's hands and the entire operation theater reverberated with the chants of 'Sadguru dev ki jai'.

* * *

A western Lady Mrs. Bernard, aged about 70 used to go around the camp enthusiastically as though spell bound. At the approach of Gurudev she would offer pranam in western fashion by kneeling down and bowing her head.

Her husband had come to India, on behalf of the American Govt. to deliver lectures on "Benefits of Vegetarian diet." While in Bombay, at the world theosophical congress, when they heard from Dinubhai that a great saint had organized an eye camp for 25 days, where 3 to 4 thousand eye operation were expected to be carried out, they could not believe it.

Dr. Bernard said that in America if about 50 operations were carried out it would be a matter of wonder and high acclaim. He expressed the desire to see the eye camp in person, and asked Dinubhai to take him along with him.

However at the last moment Dr. Bernard could not come but Mrs. Bernard came with Dinubhai. On the way Mrs. Bernard asked Dinubhai "When can we see Gurudev ? It takes us days to meet the Pope."

Dinubhai replied "Our Gurudev is available to all, and round the clock."

When they reached the camp. Poojyashri was seated in the verandah and after his Darshan, Mrs. Bernard was overcome with emotions. Throughout the day she would go round the camp and tell whosoever stopped to talk to her "I find that everything here is so peaceful and miraculous."

* * *

As was usual for an eye camp, on the concluding day, the patients were given a sumptuous meal of "Shira", a new pair of clothes and to those who needed, train fare for their return journey. Since they had never been treated with such kindness and compassion they agreed to return with lot of reluctance, all the while chanting praise of shri Gurudev.

Gurudev's spirited parting words to them were "When we were born, the pain of separation from God made us cryout as a child, while people around us laughed in celebration of our birth. Therefore our life should be so conducted by being of service to others, that at our departure (Death) we can leave this world with a smile on our face, while the people around us would be immersed in sadness at our death."

Before leaving for Bombay I asked Gurudev for his autograph on the photo, and he wrote :-

"In times of difficulties our best friend is patience, Ranchhoddas with blessings - Shivani.

As if this reflected my anguish and mental tension for the first two days

.A total of 3300 operations were performed at Shivani.

Let me repeat my feelings here :-

*"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God, (my savior)
For he hath regarded the low estate of mine and hence forth,
Generations will call me blessed.*

* * *

Sujalpur Camp**Chapter – 52**

Right from Guna till today, Dr. Chhabilbhai diligently and devotionally discharged the duties of Hon. Secretary for all the camps. Because his family members felt that on account of devoting so much time to the camps his practice would suffer, they objected to same.

When the family failed to convince him, the matter finally reached Gurudev's notice. Poojyashri wrote to him explaining that after all the arrangements for the operations were well set and the doctors were assigned their tasks, instead of staying till end, he should return to Bombay to his practice.

Dr. Chhabilbhai replied that he would not leave thus even if it meant damage to his practice, all he needed was Gurudev's permission. Poojayshri replied "All my doubts about you are cleared, your steadfast devotion obliges me to give you permission to do as you think fit. I pray that God may give you courage and energy to carry on this noble work, my blessings are always with you" and added "when you have surrendered yourself unto God, there is nothing to worry about, do come to Sujalpur;" and Chhabilbhai did come with a joyous heart.

The camp began on 8-2-1959 Dr. and Mrs. Bernard who had come from Mexico were highly impressed by the excellent organization of the camp and speed of the operation. They had never seen thousands taking meals on 'Leaf plates' and enjoyed watching them at dinner. They told Gurudev "We have need for similar camps in Mexico, would you come over there ?" Gurudev replied "We would certainly come and do all the work at our own expenses, but will your church permit it ?" They replied in resigned voice "you are right, the local church may not like it."

The camp concluded on 22-2-1959, with 4500 operations.

* * *

Saint shri GirdharRam Bapa, present head of the Virpur ashram of Jalaram Bapa, had come to Sujalpur. He requested Gurudev "Bhagwan ! When I went to Badrinarayan last year, I thought that there ought to be a 'Dharam Shala' and 'Sadhuseva' arrangement over there" when Gurudev agreed, GirdharRam Bapa added "Though I can arrange for funds, I cannot undertake such a difficult task."

Gurudev said "Well, don't you worry, all other arrangements can be managed," Bhagat Bapa was happy and left after confirming all working details.

Gurudev then called Haricharandasji and told him "Though Vaishnavdasji can look after this job of Hanuman-chatti, I think that it would be better if you go."

Though Haricharandasji obeyed, his health deteriorated due to extreme cold over there and location of the proposed 'Anna-Kshetra' had to be shifted to Pandukeshwara. As desired by Bhagat Bapa that Ashram was named as "Shri Ranchhoddasji Charitable Ashram" and during the season for pilgrimage about 50 to 60 Mahatmas are served dinner daily there at Jalaram Anna-kshetra.

The work of building a Dharam Shala at Badrinarayan was entrusted to shri Laxmichandbhai and the same was completed in 2 years and inaugurated by Poojyashri.

* *

Gurudev's Rameshwar yatra**Chapter – 53**

From Sujalpur, accompanied by some devotees, Gurudev started for Rameshwar. There is a story behind this visit :-

During September 1958, when Gurudev was in Rajkot Ashram, Nenshi Ada, who was weak with illness, had gone for Darshan but due to large crowd of devotees he had to return home without seeing Gurudev. Later Harshadbhai wrote a note to Poojyashri that Ada was very ill and pining for his Darshan. Gurudev immediately went to him and on seeing his grave condition instructed Devkaranbhai in Bombay to come to Rajkot immediately, and also informed him that now Ada would be with them only for a few days.

In order to be at the bedside of his father, Devkaranbhai came at once. After a few days, while Gurudev was in Jamnagar, Ada's health deteriorated further and he wished for Bapu's last Darshan. Gurudev returned to Rajkot, and reached Ada's bedside around 1-30 p.m. on 17th September while he was breathing his last. Poojyashri asked him lovingly "Nenshibhai ! Do you wish to tell me something?" Ada spoke with difficulty in a soft voice "I wish to go to Rameshwartirth and offer Gangajal" He firmly believed that those who went to Rameshwar and offered Gangajal, would achieve liberation from this endless cycle of Birth-Death-Rebirth.

Gurudev kindly replied "At this stage it is impossible but I will do so on your behalf and the 'Poonya' that accrues thereby shall be yours." When he found Ada still unconvinced he called for water from the house and with that in his hands, he repeated what he had promised to Nenshibhai as a solemn oath. Now Ada was at last convinced and contented, and he regained his peace of mind.

After some time, Gurudev came out of the room and told all the relatives present over there "Now he will be with us hardly for a couple of days and you should look after him." After meeting with Gurudev, Ada passed the remaining time in peace and contentment, exactly on the second day, around 1-30 p.m. he breathed his last.

It was thus that Poojyashri had to go especially to Rameshwar and he fulfilled the promise made to Ada and offered Gangajal ceremoniously on behalf of Nenshibhai.

* * *

Satna Eye camp**Chapter -54**

The first operation was performed on 24-11-1959, shri Kailashnath Katju, Chief Minister of M.P., who had extended full co-operation for the camp, asked Gurudev "The Govt. despite all its resources and after spending large amounts is not able to achieve what you have done; how could you manage such a difficult task with such meager resources?"

Gurudev replied "When the Govt. servant works he works as a part of his duties as a salaried employee, whereas our volunteers in the camp do the same task with the inborn and firm conviction that they are rendering service to their helpless brethren and they are their own kith and kin. Undoubtedly the work is tiring but when love mingles with service one is neither tired nor bored. They not only ignore fatigue, but occasionally they foreget sleep and food for long hours. The secret of our success lies in these volunteers' unceasing and selfless devotion to the cause."

Haricharandasji who had returned from Badrinarayan due to ill health was advised by Gurudev to work in the community kitchen so that his work over there would cleanse and cure him of all his illnesses. In fact, after serving in the kitchen as advised by Gurudev, Haricharandasji became well without any medication whatsoever.

Once, both Haricharandasji and Vaishnavdasji, who were working together in the kitchen came to Gurudev with the complaint, whereby both of them said "He is bossing over me", and blamed each other. Having listened to them with patience Gurudev said with a sweet smile "I am fully convinced that both of you are right, so here I am, both of you can now boss over me o.k.?"

At this, they felt ashamed at their pettiness and left quietly after offering pranam.

Truly every one of the children feel like running to their father expecting a little more love and extra attention but when they experience the pure love of their father equally for all of them, they at once give up their petty bickering.

With a tally of 4500 operations, the camp concluded on 15-12-1959.

* * *

The saint in solitude**Chapter – 55**

After the Satna camp, having stayed for a short while at Chitrakoot, Gurudev went into solitude at an unknown place without giving his whereabouts to any one. Normally, during such periods he would write to the devotees but when no news was received about his whereabouts for 1 ½ month, the anxious devotees became restless. Finally both Dinubhai and also Jairambhai received identical letters "I am going in Solitude, Do not look for me." On receiving such letter, they were worried and both Dinubhai and Jayrambhai left Bombay in search of Gurudev.

Since Madhya Pradesh was Gurudev's favourite, they first went to Guna and wired to Jamnadasbhai in Indore to come to Guna with a Jeep and a few photos of Poojyashri in different poses. Jamnadasbhai arrived as requested and one devotee of Guna shri Gaindalaji said that he had seen Gurudev boarding a bus for Kota.

They left for Kota by Jeep and in the villages along the route, they would stop and show Gurudev's photo to the Mukhia, Mahant and the village merchant and ask each one of them whether they had seen such a Mahatma during last 1 ½ months ? They shook their heads and wondered, so far they had seen searches being conducted for absconding wrong doers but this was their first experience when a Mahatma was being sought in this manner.

After visiting several villages with similar result they reached Jhalawad, the queen mother of that place was a devout follower of Gurudev. On being asked she replied "I too am unaware about his whereabouts, but you better go to Sangod, if you cannot find him there, then you should return home."

Next day, they left for Sangod and reached there at 8-30 p.m. When they repeated the procedure of searching for Gurudev in the local market, on showing the photo, the cloth merchant said that this Mahatmaji was camping in 'The Ghost Garden' outside the village.

Because the villagers were afraid of ghosts, supposed to be over there, for the first few days of the Mahtma's stay, none went near him, but now since the Babaji does not visit the village, the people go over there for Darshan, and listen to his simple yet soulful pravachan on the Ramyana.

Without wasting time, they rushed straight to the 'Ghost Garden' where Poojyashri was resting in peace and total serenity. They raised the chant "Sadguru dev ki Jai" and fell at his feet. At first he asked in a stringent voice "Dispite my orders why did you come ?" but when he saw their crestfallen faces he softened.

Taking advantage of his love for his devotees, Jamnadasbhai narrated their experiences in his inimitable style. Now Gurudev had a hearty laugh at their concern for him. Thus with his presence of mind Jamnadasbhai lightened the tense atmosphere.

They stayed there for a few days and having completed his stay of a month in that village, Gurudev too left with them in the open Jeep.

When Gurudev was thus leaving for Pushkar, the entire village turned up for giving him a warm but tearful send off.

* * *

The Agony of Separation from God**Chapter – 56**

After celebration Ram – Navmi at Chitrakoot, Poojyashri came to Mahabaleshwar via Bombay. Gurudev began his 'Solitude cum Moun' upasana here in a bungalow where Dadasaheb had made arrangements for the same.

No one was to go to his room. At a fixed time, Krishnaben would place the tiffin box in the verandah outside his room and he would take it when no one was around. Occasionally Gurudev used to go for evening walk all alone. None would meet him or go in front of him, the devotees would have the Darshan from a distance. On his part, he would look only straight ahead and walk briskly, some time descending the adjacent hills and valleys for about an hour or so, he would sit under a tree totally immersed in inner joy. The bungalow was so situated in a remote place that Gurudev got the desired peace and solitude.

Two months passed by, one day ahead of the day fixed for him to come out of the 'Sadhana', some devotees, came for Darshan, from outside Mahabaleshwar.

I was performing devotional 'Parikrama' around the bldg. before the time fixed for his appearance, I had resolved to do 108 'Parikramas', suddenly I heard a sobbing sound from inside his room. I could not believe it. So I went nearer and got confirmation of my doubts. Shocked by this unprecedented incident, I completed the 'Parikrama' and wondered what worldly or bodily distress could make such a God like person sob, since he possessed the powers to turn other's sorrows to smiles ?

Suddenly I remembered his own words spoken in a public discourse. During his 'Kashta – Moun' at Jamnagar, he had experienced such divine joy that he had wished the duration of 2 years to become 5 years so that he could remain in that state of supreme bliss but then he had to come out and mingle with people, greatly against his will on God's order and for good of the people.

The same anguish was being repeated here which must have made him sob, at the thought of separation from God and reintegration with the world.

He would smile in his union with God in solitude when his devotees cried, but when at the thought of seeing him, his devotees would smile, he would weep on separation from God, what an irony ?

As the doors opened, he appeared with lustrous face, totally serene and the divinity of his personality was further enhanced by the two month's growth of beard. With folded hands he greeted all the assembled devotees, who were overcome with tears of joy at his sight.

Once again the mundane routine began. Numerous letters, telegrams and notes, seeking salvation from worldly ills. He heard every body's problems and read as many letters as possible and kept the rest tied up in a kerchief for leisurely perusal.

Next day, that bundle of letters was by his side on the car seat, when he commenced his journey for Mavinkere. Truly it seems that he was obliged to give up the solace of solitude to attend to these tearful letters.

* * *

Questions – Answers on Philosophy**Chapter – 57**

Around Mavinkere in the south, in Manglore dist. There are numerous tea and coffee gardens. In one such garden, Jairambhai arranged for Gurudev's 2 month's stay for 'Moun'. On Guru purnima Gurudev gave Darshan to all the devotees.

During this period some question – answers on philosophy were exchanged, though due to 'Moun' Gurudev replied in writing only.

Q: What is the essence of 'Pran', what is Death ?

A: The 'Vayus' are of 10 types, 5 are within our body while the other 5 manifest themselves as disorders only when an imbalance occurs in our system. Generally the life force is considered synonymous with 'Pran Vayu' and thus on death we say "the Pran has gone" It is stationed in the heart, but it is wrong to say that only 'Pran' has gone with 'Jiva'. Totally there are 17 constituents like mind, intellect and others which together makes up our 'Vasana' body that goes along with our life force on death. This Jiva with these 17 elements takes rebirth according to our 'Karma'.

The world exists only on account of our Egoistic sense of Doership. As soon as this ego Vanishes the world also vanishes, this is salvation.

Q: Can we change the nature of the 'Jiva' ?

A. : Our nature i.e. 'Prakruti' is of two kinds.

(i) Our nature by birth and (2) By conditioning.

The first is 'Mula' i.e. inborn nature and that goes only on death. The second one, which is a result of good or bad conditioning, can be changed.

Q: What is Jiva ?

A: Consciousness of 'Atman'

Q: Can the 'Jiva' see itself and experience feelings after the death ?

A: Our experiences through sense organs such as touch, smell, sound, taste etc. constitute our memory, this memory of the world becomes 'Vasana' and the reason for our rebirth. An Yogi can experience these feelings even without sense organs but ordinary person who lack the extra sensory perceptory powers cannot experience these feelings without sense organs.

Q: We have heard that Totapuriiji made it possible for swami Ramkrishna Paramhans to experience the formless 'Nirgun' Brahman in 'Saguna' form, kindly explain about 'Nirguna' meditation.

A: Totapuriiji merely got credit for what Ramkrishnaji deserved and experienced, from 'Kali-Mata', who manifested herself before him in her divine grace due to the saint's own efforts. This knowledge that his "Ishta Devi" is in 'Nirguna' as well as 'Saguna' form gave him immense joy. Paramhansji was beyond a feeling of Egoconsciousness and he made Totapuriiji realize the folly of same, and 'Maya'.

Q: Does the world continue to exist for the one who has truly realized the 'Brahman' ?

A: The man who has thus realized does not acknowledge the existence of the world as we know it, but by his mere denial the world does not cease to exist. An owl can not see in sunlight but that does not make the sun without existence.

Similarly, since God, our life force and the world are beyond time, they are bound to continue to exist whether we acknowledge them or not.

Let me explain meditation by a simple example. A child who cries is at once fed by the mother, since crying is prelude to getting fed the child always cries out when he is hungry.

All meditation and chanting of God's name with full realization of our limitations are asking to our crying for help from mother. When we meditate on God's glory, greatness and supremacy, our faith becomes stronger but as soon as our mind wanders from God then our devotion unto him gets shaken and weak.

There is no difference between the God and the Guru but since meditation on Guru is difficult we advise everyone to meditate on God.

* * *

An unusual experience of mine

Chapter – 58

“Set aside all your worries and surrender unto me exclusively and I shall liberate you from all your sins”

- Geeta.

After returning to Bombay from Jaipur, at the first opportunity I met Rita, a catholic girl of about 20, very straight forward and a close friend of mine.

While I would be with Gurudev, she would busy herself with college but no sooner we met, we would exchange our experiences and talk frankly and at length because she was talkative and a pleasant companion. Having been brought up in Bombay and due to her cultural back ground and ‘Modern thinking’ she was fully engrossed in her world of fashion.

At our meeting she said “I don’t mind your going to Gurudev or your serving in the camp but I do object to your discarding the ‘Bombay way of life.’ You refuse to see movies and visit hotels, now onwards you shall do as I say.”

I smiled and asked “what do you wish me to do ?” Now she said with all seriousness “I will give it to you straight, before you turn into a bore in the company of your Mahatmaji, I would like to make a real modern girl out of you, first cut off these ponytails and with bob – cut hair style I will take you for learning western dance” We had been close friends for long and she wished to ‘modernise’ me so that our friendship may continue.

I replied “I am not going to give up all these things, I have vowed not to see movies or visit hotels only till Gurudev is in ‘Moun’ then we can do as you wish “I got my hair trimmed and it pleased her immensely, and she said “Be ready for the dancing school in 2 days.”

I began to mentally rationalize my future course of action "What is wrong with dancing ? Many a time during Christmas I have seen the dance at Rita's place gradually I will get accustomed to it."

Needless to say that such thinking was result of company, which plays a crucial role in shaping our character. After a night's rest I was feeling cheerful and suddenly the bell rang and I received Gurudev's letter by post, it read :-

"Dear Damu,

My hearty blessings, last night I had a bad dream and if it comes to be true it will indeed be a calamity. Be careful. My blessings to all. -Ranchhoddas

* * *

Tryambakeshwar,

Dear Damu,

My hearty blessings, my health is indifferent but you need not worry. Considering your thought processes, I am afraid for you that you may lose your path.

Youth and wealth are transient but while they last a person gets carried away by their force and makes his life full of misery. Therefore be careful and do not get dazzled by them (youth and wealth), and ruin your life because once this period is over, none will give you a second glance.

When I think of your emotional temperament and habit of hasty actions I am very much worried about you. Be careful.

With blessings.

- Ranchhoddas.

The letter slipped from trembling hands, now it was impossible to stay in Bombay, I prepared myself to go to Tryambakeshwar.

Gurudev was in Tryambakeshwar Dharamshala and on seeing me he smiled sweetly. I could not face him, his two letters were agitating my mind.

At last I asked "Bhagwan ! What did you see in your dream ? I was dumbstruck when he replied "that you had trimmed your hair and were going to club for dancing." Distance was no obstacle to such

Mahatmas. This divine and omniscient saint had undertaken to protect me from all harm, on my having surrendered unto him.

He had graciously given me 'Diksha' at Satna, and had thereby accepted my surrender and had undertaken to shield me from all evils. This was an opportune time for him to discharge that responsibility. His words had their electrifying effect, I promised that at all times I would follow the path as may be shown by Poojyashri.

Had I listened to Rita and allowed myself to be immersed in her world, in course of time that transient dazzle would have faded and it would have left me empty and exhausted. It was indeed my good fortune that shri Gurudev had showered his benign grace on me and saved me and stopped me from going astray.

As instructed by Gurudev, I directly left with Chanduben's family for Murena Camp.

There was no occasion to meet Rita, ever again.

Truly as the poet says :-

*"Even a small beginning of evil
Is harbinger for the greatest evil"*

* * *

Murena Eye Camp**Chapter – 59**

In Murena, the first operation was performed on 1-1-1961. Situated in Bhind Dist. Murena is notorious for it's dacoits and working over there is dangerous. Yet in obedience to Gurudev's instruction, the volunteers commenced their activities. Half the village population was engaged in professional wrestling, and you can see wrestling bouts taking place in streets.

Poojyashri had instructed every one at the camp not to go inside the village or even look at any woman from that village.

Once the camp's publicity Jeep was stopped by some dacoits but when their chief saw the camp banner with Gurudev's name, he asked for forgiveness from the driver and issued instructions to his followers to give all co-operation to the workers of the camp. Further, impressed by the saintly reputation of Gurudev and selfless service of the volunteers, the chief not only co-operated but told his followers to act as guardians of the camp.

Since there was shortage of accommodation in Murena, the Chief ordered all vacant houses should be thrown open for the camp volunteers. The Chief was so co-operative that if something was urgently needed at the camp, he would arrange for same even at midnight. Thus Gurudev's Charisma worked even on the murderous dacoits, where the law fails the saint prevails, this was the difference between the Govt. and a saint.

One night heavy rains started. Gurudev was resting after mild indisposition. Despite his illness he rushed from his room and jumping over the 4' high boundary wall he went out, refusing the protection of an umbrella, he gazed at the skies and raised the right hand, and in about 4 minutes the rains stopped.

Jasabhai inadvertently recited a couplet meaning that "the horses of the rain God couased a stampede but these wild rainhorses were checked by the benign gaze and grace of our Gurudev."

Poojyashri went to the waterlogged wards and took up the shovel in his own hands to divert the waters, seeing this, others joined in and were able to abate the disturbance caused by the sudden rains.

Poojyashri said "Even now, it is raining heavily about a little distance away, God saved our patients and protected our camp." Then added with a smile "On auspicious functions like this camp, Lord Indra has sent his approving benediction in form of rains." Omkarbhai who had gone outside for fetching vegetables returned to the camp drenched to the skin by heavy rains which continued outside the camp premises.

* * *

Once Gurudev visited the house of Tehsildar of that village, who being a devout person had invited Gurudev. Another devotee who was present over there one Shaligramji asked "Why is it that you always visit houses of the well to do, will you come to my house?" Gurudev replied with a smile "How can I come unless you invite, now that you have done so, I will come one day."

One morning he went to his house and seeing weapons like sword etc. hanging from the walls, he asked "What are these meant for?" Shaligramji replied "They are for defence and service of the nation" Gurudev said "If you wish to serve the nation, come to Chitrakoot." Shaligramji promptly agreed and after taking the 'Virakti' Diksha, he came to be known as 'Shaligramji Mahraj'.

Gurudev was informed that the 'Shri Lalji idol at Chitrakoot had got damaged due to age and was broken he sadly remarked "Shri Lalji has gone" and added "Who can oppose God's wish?"

Jamnadasbhai told Poojyashri that the devotees wished to install a life sized idol of shri Ram in that temple, while agreeing he remarked again "But shri Lalji has left us." He instructed that the new idol should be procured from Jaipur, where the artisans are experts in marble sculpture. He further asked that Haricharandasji be called from Gondal to Murena. When Haricharandasji came as instructed, he was sent to Chitrakoot for preparations for the ceremony of installation of the new idol.

Gurudev's measurements were taken for the life size idol of shri Ram and Mahrajbhai was sent to Jaipur for selecting the same. With a tally of 3036 opetations, the camp concluded on 22-2-1961.

* * *

The Guru knows what is Good for his devotees

Chapter – 60

Gurudev invited all the devotees in the camp to come to Jankikund for the inaugural ceremony with the exception of Jasabhai. Jasabhai asked on his own "Bapu ! May I come along ?" Gurudev said "No" yet Jasabhai insisted "I have lot of unutilized leave, thus there is no problem on that account." Gurudev remained silent.

After a while Bholabhai came and he too was duly invited. Watching all this Jamnadasbhai said "Bapu ! Let Jasabhai also come along, he will be very useful in conducting 'Ram-Dhun' in the temple's bhajan programme. Gurudev still remained silent. While leaving Murena for Rajkot, Jasabhai asked "Should I visit Mathura Vrindavan on my way ?" The reply was "you may, but only for a couple of days, no more."

After a pilgrimage of only 2 days on his way, when Jasabhai reached Rajkot, he received the news "Jasodaben is being shifted to Rajkot and being admitted in the hospital, be there without delay." When he reached there he learnt that his sister was stricken with meningitis.

Now he realized why Gurudev had not invited him to Chitrakoot and further told him not to spend more than 2 days at Mathura. Had he gone to Chitrakoot, he would have been obliged to rush to Rajkot to be near his sister because there was no one except him to look after her. Now he realized that Gurudev's apparent harshness towards him was like the doctor's strictness in restricting the diet of his patient, and the same is meant for the well being of the patient himself.

Truly the actions of saints can never be evaluated by our standards and our limited intellect.

* * *

Gurudev in Mathura

Chapter – 61

After Murena Camp, Poojyashri spent a few days in Mathura Dharam Shala. Our daily routine was to first visit some of the temples and then after the noon meal, he would reverentially have the Darshan of the Dwarikadhish temple on the banks of Yamuna and also the Kadamba tree. Once he noted in his diary "Every particle of Vrindavan is permeated by shri Krishna."

At night he would sit on the river bank in the moon light and as the moon rose higher and higher, his mood too would be lifted upwards. He would gaze serenely at the calm waters of the river without uttering a word. Sometimes he would write, "How serene and peaceful are the vibrations of this place, this is the proof positive of sanctity of a place of pilgrimage."

Once he wrote, "Look at the Yamuna waters, they are the same at all its Ghats, without any change of taste, colour or form. In cold they may turn to ice and once again to water in the warm season. The same is true of God, whether you consider him as 'Sagun' (with attributes) or 'Nirgun' (without attributes), whether as Ram or Shyam, the essential attributes are same. Ram was 'Maryada Purshottam' while Krishna was 'Leela Purshottam', you can faithfully worship any one of them according to your faith in your worship and solace that your mind may obtain."

We have attributed unto God various names, forms and places but he is all pervading and omnipresent. We are the creators of the various cults and sects and God in his infinite kindness appears before us in the form and manner of our worship. The three paths to God realization lead to the same destination, they are Knowledge, Devotion and Action and they converge into one as we advance on the path of our worship unto him. The fourth path is that of 'Total and Unconditional surrender' unto him and only those with true humility can attain this path."

"If one has faith and confidence, he can realize God in his sublime form by any one of these paths, and we have no business to sit in judgement and decide which path is true and which is not; whichever path appeals to your inclination, adopt it with supreme faith and devotion and you are sure to realize him."

As though spellbound, I continued reading his diary. On the last day of our stay in Mathura, Gurudev organized Bhandara for saints and Mahatmas.

From Mathura Poojyashri went to Chitrakoot via Anantpur. The devotees who were invited to the inauguration ceremony were joyous and in a state of ever increasing ecstasy as the appointed day drew nearer.

From Chiatra 1st day to Ramnavmi day, 'Navahna-Parayan', 'Hom', 'Havan' and 'Sankirtan with constant Ram-Dhun were organized. Maharajbhai arrived with the chosen idol of 'Shri Ram and Jankiji' initially they were placed in the 'Path-Shala' bldg; and all the pre-installation rituals were performed with due ceremony.

Amidst a crowd of thousands of devotees the idols were ceremoniously taken to the inner temple. At mid-day they were installed with proper 'Pooja', 'Archan' and 'Aarti'. Thus the ceremony concluded amidst joy and excitement.

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Gurudev Tours our Borders

Chapter – 62

The devotees, who had come for the installation ceremony, told Gurudev "The nation is facing an emergency, the danger of war and aggression is all around." Poojyashri agreed and said "Yes, the vibrations are extremely bad, yet so long as the country has one true Yogi it will not come to major harm" He added. "Though a yogi can influence events even from a distance, yet the nearer he is to the source of danger, greater would be his influence on the particles that are posing danger to our nation; and therefore I wish to travel along our borders and pray for defence of our country, perhaps God will listen to my prayers and we may be free from the dangers that are imminent from across our borders."

All the devotees were overjoyed and started preparations for the journey. Kashmir was to be the first destination. The necessary luggage was loaded on a station wagon and Haricharndasji was to attend on Gurudev.

From Chitrakoot, he went to Satna via Paparenda. And having completed all the formalities of establishing "Shri Raghuvir Mandir Trust" and having deposited the requisite amount there in the Bank, they proceeded on their onwards journey, which continued during the night also.

Having driven the vehicle through the day, the night journey proved to be a strain on the driver, early in the morning around 5-00 a.m. about 8 miles from Sagar, the driver dozed off for a split second and there was a violent collision with a bullock cart. Though Poojyashri, and Haricharandasji received only minor injuries the driver of the bullock cart was indeed serious and was profusely bleeding through the mouth, nose and the ears. Promptly alighting from the car Poojyashri started wiping the blood from the cart driver's body with his own handkerchief and said "Let him be placed in the car and we will take him to hospital in Sagar." The driver protested "Maharajshri that would get us involved in

a police case, let us give him some money and leave for Bhopal before police enquiry starts, as yet it is early in the morning and there are no witnesses to the accident."

Gurudev replied firmly "I don't mind getting involved, since this man needs urgent medical attention, we must get him admitted to a hospital."

When the driver gave the excuse that the vehicle was unfit for further journey due to the damage, Gurudev quietly went off on foot to Sagar, walked the 8 mile distance and having registered the accident with the police, he returned in a taxi.

By that time a crowd had gathered on the spot. The police came and after preliminary enquiries shifted the cart driver to hospital. He was hospitalized for 20 days and Gurudev stayed there in Sagar for the entire period and arranged for the cart driver's medication, fruits etc. When the injured person regained consciousness on the 20th day, he gave the statement before the police "The fault was entirely mine, because I dozed off for a while and collided with the car "The driver was now full of repentance that he had ignored Gurudev's instructions earlier.

Considering the accident as a bad omen, he cancelled his journey to Kashmir and as we know during 1965 war, maximum fighting occurred over there. Thus we see that the saints who act in our world of 'Maya' do so only on the designs of 'Mayapati' i.e. God almighty. However Gurudev toured all other regions on our western border to create benevolent vibrations over there except Kashmir, he performed an Yogic technique called 'Disha Bandhan' (Securing the borders) and it so happened that the places which he visited were spared from any loss of life.

Thus we could see that soulful prayers of Mahatmas do play a crucial role in such situations.

* * *

The Yogi is beyond Time and Space

Chapter – 63

From Sagar, Gurudev went to Haridwar and then on to Badri Kedar, Gangotri and Jamnotri for pilgrimage. Then on the occasion of celebration of 'Guru-Purnima' he went to Banaras. Over there he stayed with the family of Thakore saheb Pradyumansinhji of Rajkot in the Kabir Kirti Mandir.

Once when the Thakore saheb had organized a Bhandara, Gurudev had severe attack of asthma and coughing, for nearly 4 to 5 hours. Thakore saheb was worried and wished to postpone the Bhandara. Poojyashri stopped him from this action and assured him that by the time of the Bhandara (i.e. next day) everything would be fine once again.

Next day on the occasion of the Bhandara Thakore saheb was surprised by the agility and energy with which Gurudev was actively serving food to the invited Mahatmas, as though he had never been ill.

* * *

That year the cold in Banaras was the most severe on record as per last 10 years data. Gurudev used to lie down in repose in the rear verandah in the warmth of the afremoon sun.

On 19th December, 1961 when Parvatiben thought him to be asleep, Gurudev suddenly got up and said "Goa, Goa, Goa" When none could understand, he explained "Goa is liberated" and he closed his eyes. Next day, the radio and the newspapers published the news of Goa's liberation from Portuguese rule.

All of us wondered at this 'How was it possible ? Did Gurudev go over to Goa in his subtle body, while appearing asleep over here or was it that like the T.V. that he saw Goa's liberation from over here ?'

I used to observe him during his afternoon nap, many a time I would see strange phenomena occurring in his body. At such times, parts of his feet would be in motion but his serene face would show him to be in sound sleep. At times his eyes would be moving briskly behind closed lids during the sound sleep. On such occasions we could make out from his talk on waking up that he had visited some other place during his apparent sleep over here.

* * *

Shri Vishnu Maha – Yag**Chapter – 64**

During February 1962, the astrologers had predicted that on account of Conjunction of 8 planets (Ashta Grahi Yog) there would be a great calamity. Such a conjunction had taken place during Mahabharat war. Poojyashri was in Kirti mandir in Banaras and one devotee Chhelubhai asked him “Bapu ! This conjunction indicates great upheavals in the world, can it be averted ?”

Gurudev replied calmly “Don’t worry, there will not be much harm, yet it would be better to do something to minimize the evil effects by propitiation of planets” As instructed by Poojyashri, a nine day recitation of ‘Ram-Charit Manas’ and performance of an Yagna were organized. Many Mahatmas from all over the holy places showed willingness to participate in the yagna.

Along with the yagna, all undertook 108 recitations of Manasji for averting the impending calamity. Ramadharidasji Mahraj of Chitrakoot undertook to preside over the recitation and the entire village of Paparendra volunteered to become the venue of the Yagna. The visitors from surrounding villages were so numerous that, even with a donation of Re.1/- by each of them, the daily collection amounted to more than Rs.5000/-.

* * *

Once when Gurudev was passing by, several devotees who had come for “Darshan” started offering Re. 1/- each at his feet. A very old lady, with a view to tender her offering, was trying hard to open the knot in her Saree to submit her amount. Gurudev spoke in a light tone “Ma ! Give me my rupee, I am very fond of getting Dakshina from you people.” But all were astonished when the old lady at last succeeded in untying the knot of her saree and offered a well preserved but wrinkled 100/- rupee note at Gurudev’s feet. (Needless to say that 100 Rupee note with ruling Gold prices below Rs. 100/- per 10 gm. was equivalent to Rs. 5,000/- at today’s prices).

Gurudev observed that her donation to the cause was supreme, Ma must have saved for long and collected this amount to make such an offering which may be her entire life savings, leaving her nothing, while others donate only the surplus from their savings, Ma had given her ALL. "What can I do for her in return?" he asked.

* * *

At the public meals on occasion of the Bhandara along with the Yagna, people were given a 'feast' of Puri and Sugar. In U.p. people are accustomed to eat the same with joy. It was a commonplace sight for one diner to eat as much as $\frac{1}{4}$ Kg. of sugar with each meal.

Passing buses were stopped and passengers thereon invited to partake the meals enthusiastically and yet only 2 bags of sugar was consumed. Same was the case with 'Bundi Ladoos', which were prepared in a limited quantity yet they remained unexhausted despite the fact that thousands had eaten them for their meals.

Thus the yagna concluded on a joyous note; such 'Anusthans' were organized all over India and because of them and blessings of saints like Gurudev and offerings like the old lady, the major calamity was averted.

* * *

After Paparenda, similar 'Manas Parayan' was done in Khaptiha also. The school built over there during this period by the villagers, was named after Gurudev. At present it houses 400 students.

* * *

Guna Eye Camp**Chapter – 65**

Gurudev decided to have a second eye camp at Guna. The Guna jail was newly built and still unoccupied. At the request of the volunteers, the camp was held in that premises. It had a vast compound and comfortable rooms for all. The first operation was on 18-2-1963.

In this camp Gurudev used to welcome new arrivals with the jocular remark “Guna means crime, therefore, those who come to Guna are housed in the Jail.” He added “Till we do our duties with attachments and desires, we are imprisoned in this worldly prison therefore if you do your duties with detachment and without expectations you will be released from this Jail and instead of prisoners you will become a Jailor. A Jailor too comes to the jail but merely to discharge his duties and not to undergo imprisonment. The Jail rules do not apply to him. The saints come to the world like a Jailor, not to undergo imprisonment but in obedience to God’s command and not to suffer or enjoy for their acts like others.”

The camp concluded with 2321 operations on 10-3-1963.

* * *

During one of his discourses at Chitrakoot Gurudev had said “I have toured all over India on foot when there were no Railways and the population was only 3 crores.” He continued “Many years ago I had gone to Virpur and was received by Jalaram Bapa who honoured the saints. He invited me to dine. I said I do not eat food prepared by others, Bhagatji took out a Roti from his shoulder bag and said “Take this Roti as Shri Ramji’s Prasadi’. I touched it to my head and returned it saying I do not eat Roti with Ghee; now Bhagatji took out another dry Roti and gave me and I ate the same with delight.”

When Gurudev arrived at Jharia from Chitrakoot, There was ‘Manasji recital’ and ‘Sankirtan’ at the residence of shri Purushottambhai Sonpal. After celebrating Ram-Navmi and Hanuman Jayanti over there, Gurudev left on a pilgrimage to Jagannathpuri along with some devotees.

* * *

Gondia Eye Camp and the Second eye camp at Chitrakoot

Chapter – 66

The venue of the next eye camp was Gondia in Maharashtra. The first operation was performed on 1-12-1963.

During this camp, Gurudev was bedridden for some time. He was dogged by asthma, cough and fever. Since he needed round the clock care and vigil, devotees assigned duty hours among themselves. Chhelubhai, Vajubhai and Omkarbhai were assigned the task, in shifts. The first day was uneventful but on the night shift of second day, due to pleasant warmth of the heater, (in this freezing cold), Omkarbhai dozed off to sleep for a while and could not be there to assist Gurudev when he had to go to toilet during the night, but he suddenly woke up at the sound of the closing door, he felt very contrite and henceforth he was more diligent in performance of his duties.

While the volunteers were thus being rotated to provide them relief from fatigue, during his discourse Gurudev spoke on service and sacrifice :-

“Service is to sacrifice our all in the service of one whom we serve. This is more suited to women’s nature, once they undertake to serve, they forget themselves. The bodily service is not everything yet the same can never go in vain. If you transcend the body and do your meditation in solitude, then the joy obtained thereby will be beyond description. The female form is made up of emotions and full of steadfastness and therefore in this form chances for salvation are greater.

The families of Chatrabhujbhai and Narendrabhai performed note worthy services in this camp, which ended on 25-12-63 with 5059 operations.

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In the second Chitrakoot camp, the first operation was performed on 14-11-1964 and the camp concluded on 25-11-1964 with 4210 operations.

One Jain Yetiji, who came from Baroda had lost his eyesight since last 22 years and all the doctors had given up hope about his cure. Even at Chitrakoot Eye Camp, the doctors gave a negative report and being thus disappointed from all quarters, he approached Gurudev, Who gave him solace and sent him back to Baroda.

On reaching Baroda, the Yetiji was pleasantly surprised when at first he could discern dim light and gradually he began to see normally. By the grace of Gurudev, his eyesight was restored without any medication or surgery or any other treatment whatsoever.

Such a Guru who can make his disciple see and realize the supreme 'Brahman' through divine sight can naturally restore eye sights in the worldly sense.

* * *

Sagar Eye Camp

Chapter – 67

The first operation was performed on 14-2-1965, during the camp, Gurudev visited the kitchen and on one occasion all saints and Mahatmas present over there got up from their seats and performed dandvat pranam with full faith and reverence.

Seeing this, Parvatiben said "Even the saints are attracted by you." After a moment's silence he replied "Paro ! This attraction is due to the Bhajan that this body did in the past. You are watching the strength of devotion."

Hirabhai, an Aahir by birth was true devotee and got constructed a magnificent temple beside his home. God is not partial to any community and therefore such an inborn urge of dedication to God could be in any community. After the temple was ready, he sent an invitation through Bhanubhai Pobaru at the camp requesting Gurudev to grace the occasion for installation of the idol in the temple at his auspicious hands. The ceremony was to be accompanied by 108 'Manas-Path', Yagna, 'Sadhu-Bhojan' etc. He also invited all other saints and Mahatmas to grace the occasion of installation of the 'Ram-Sita' idols. Poojyashri agreed and fixed up 9th of Vaisakh Sudi.

The army Camp at Sagar had extended its' whole hearted co-operation in the undertaking and Manibhai Patel invited Gurudev to visit the place where the Jawans were being trained. He addressed them with a patriotic and forceful oration.

The Camp concluded on 3-3-1965 with a total of 4783 operations.

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Experiences of Kum. Geetadevi**Chapter – 68**

In 1963, when Poojyashri was on a visit to Rajkot, when we reached the Ashram, we saw a brilliant young lady of about 18 to 19 years, reported to possess a charismatic personality, sitting in a room, awaiting Gurudev's Darshan. Let us read in her own words, what impressions she had of Gurudev at this first meeting :-

'Our birth in human form is golden opportunity for our salvation and is given to us as a result of our past good deeds. It is only in this human form, that we can realize the supreme truth after removing the hurdles of ignorance i.e. Maya, and in order to do so we need the guidance of a Mahatma to make us fit for God realization. Though I had heard about Gurudev, so far I did not get an opportunity of his Darshan, I had a strong desire to meet him on account of his works of public welfare and knowledge of the ultimate reality, so when the news of his arrival in Rajkot spread like wild fire I too reached his Ashram, along with an acquaintance, with enthusiasm and anticipation.

When I saw the dense crowd of devotees, my hopes of meeting him dimmed. How will I ever be able to approach and have his Darshan from a reasonable distance ? My inquisitiveness grew and my thought processes began their questions at the speed of lightning. "What will he be like ?"

My overheated imagination conjured up various forms and shapes. Will the saint have a 'Jata' on his head and the customary big Tilak mark on his forehead ? Till then I had come across many saints and Mahatmas, perhaps he too will be having similar pomp and show.

While I was lost in reveries, with a garland in my hand, fearing that it may get wilted, someone came along and told us about his arrival and instructed us to sit in a room and wait. The agony of anticipation was so great that this waiting seemed a punishment.

At last our patience was rewarded and Gurudev entered the room in which we were waiting. Contrary to all my expectation he was

dressed in simple white as though his greatness lay in his sublime simplicity. His luminous face made me bow down with reverence at his feet, with the garland still in my hand.

He sat on an immaculate asan in one corner of the room and then I too sat down along with other 8 to 10 devotees. Glancing at me, he asked "Are you Geetadevi ? I have heard that you deliver very good discourses on Geeta. Givivng discourses is quiet good but the scriptures are meant to be put into practice and by following them one must make his life an ideal one and worthy of emulation."

I thought, how effective, simple and straight from the heart is his talk ? Then with a sudden change of subject, he said "Nowadays even youngsters have begun to give discourses on Geeta, which was not fully understood even by great and learned Mahatmas and sages like shri Shankaracharya;" He added as an after thought "It would be better that either you get married or devote your entire life to service of God." At these strong but true words, I was annoyed and my ego was hurt. Every one else in the room was speechless.

From that day onwards, having formed a peculiar impression about him, I never went for his Darshan for another 2 years, perhaps it was destined to be so, and I lost that much time to be near him.

With a view to discover the essence of life, man makes ceaseless efforts and undertakes several activities such as 'Katha', 'Kirtan' and Bhagwat Saptah etc. A Bhagwat Saptah, was organized for public welfare a the place of shri Narotambhai Nandani. His aunt Velama was a staunch devotee of Poojyshri and at her invitation, he had come to Rajkot.

Since I had continued with my activities of public welfare during these two years, perhaps my good deeds bore fruit. Nandanibhai being one of the trustees of Gita Mandir, it was natural for me to attend the 'Saptah' along with other devotees. Once while the Katha was proceeding in pindrop silence, the arrival of Poojyashri caused a rush for his Darshan. Reliving my rebuff of two years back in my imagination, I ignored his entry. While I thought this is the same Ranchhoddasji Maharaj who advised me to get married, he spoke out "Do not cause disturbance in the Katha, listen in silence". At his sweet voice and his magnetic personality

sitting on the stage appearing divinity incarnate, my mind softened and I decided to go and offer pranam to him.

Thus with the rushing fold of past memories, while I was offering pranam, Nandanibhai began to introduce me, Gurudev stopped him midway and said "I know her, our acquaintance dates back over some years." The tone of his voice was apparently overflowing with love and affection. He made me sit near him and was so considerate about my comfort that if any one among the crowd of devotees that came for Darshan, gave me an inadvertent and slight push, then he would express his disapproval and annoyance.

My mind contrasted today's kindness with the curtness of the past and concluded "The hearts of Mahatmas are indeed tougher than 'Vajra' yet softer than flowers."

The scriptures tell us about a true Guru in these words :- Men may read profound books like "Upnishad" and meditate ceaselessly upon the infinite yet until the grace of a true Guru is bestowed on him, he will remain like a flower without fragrance and a lake without water or a body without soul.

The two wings on the path of devotion are knowledge and detachment, but along with these wings, we need the eyes of a 'Sadguru' who alone can lead his stumbling devotee to salvation with his infinite store of knowledge and wisdom.

On account of these thoughts, I decided to obtain 'Diksha' from Gurudev and he graciously agreed and thus I found that my prayers and devotion to God were answered.

My 'Diksha' took place in Rajkot Ashram, early morning on 10-5-1965, I can only relive and feel that pleasure in memory but I am unable to translate that joy into words.

* * *

At noon of the same day, shri 'Ram-Sita' idols were to be installed in temple at Popatpara. In the morning, Jairambhai had asked "Bapu ! What is 'Pran Pratistha' ?" Gurudev replied "It means invocation of 'Pran' in the idol, you can see it on the occasion of installation."

As decided earlier, at noon, amidst chants of Jai-Jaikars by the devotees, the idols of shri 'Ram-Sita' were ceremoniously installed in the temple by auspicious hands of shri Gurudev. At the time of installation Jairambhai stood very close to Gurudev, he felt the life like shivering in the idol and the same continued for several minutes. Many devotees experienced exstatic pleasure while watching the ceremony.

Thus the function concluded amidst an atmosphere of joy and celebration. Hirabhai spent liberally on the occasion and shri Natubhai was chosen to officiate as the priest.

Truly about '*Pran Pratistha*' the poet says :-

*"It awoke with the incantation of Mantras,
and having thus been sanctified by divinity,
the idol was no longer of stone but now
infused with sublime divinity."*

* * *

Gurudev's Grace on his Devotees**Chapter – 69**

Once, during a car journey from Pushkar, accompanied by Thakorebhai in that extreme heat, Gurudev stopped the car under a tree. He asked Thakorebhai whether he would like something to eat. Thakorebhai said he would, but he had only 'Theplas' and nothing else to eat them with. By the time a luscious ripe mango fell at their feet and Gurudev told him to pick it up and eat it along with his 'Theplas'.

When Thakorebhai objected saying that it was a Govt. orchard, Gurudev said "So what " You have not plucked it, go ahead and eat it." Thus being reassured, Thakorebhai ate his meal with relish.

Gurudev was very fond of providing meals and snacks for his devotees, especially so during journeys. He set aside for them rare eatables like grapes, dry fruits etc. He would just say "Just taste and see whether the grapes are sweet or sour, because sour things are bad for my asthma, after your tasting, I too can have some, Hoping that Gurudev would have some grapes, none could decline this invitation to taste.

On the occasion of Ramnavmi celebrations at Purshottambhai's house in Jharia, large quantity of almonds were offered at Gurudev's feet by devotees. Parvatiben set them aside and prepared "Badam Puri" for him and presented them before Gurudev. He tasted one and said "How nice" and then at night, when the devotees came for darshan he said "Tell Parvati to bring that box of Badam Puri and told all of them to take a piece and see, how proficient Parvati was at the task of preparing "Badam Puris."

While Parvatiben looked on with suppressed annoyance, Gurudev distributed the entire box among his devotees. Such incidents occurred often and he felt real satisfaction only after distributing nourishing delicacies among his devotees.

* * *

Compassion for the needy

Chapter – 70

Once Poojyashri was travelling from Jamnagar to Rajkot with Mohanbhai, who insisted that Gurudev should sit on a blanket and he spread the same over the train bench. Despite Grudev's declining this convenience at Mohanbhai's insistence, he sat on the blanket for a while.

As the train was moving along, Gurudev saw a man inobvious need of clothes and before Mohanbhai could stop him, Gurudev picked up the blanket and threw it out of the train in such a manner that the poor man with tattered clothes could pick it up easily. Now having helped the man in need, Gurudev derived immense satisfaction.

* * *

Once when he was on visit to Benaras, he would be going out from Kirti Mandir early in the morning. Every day he used to carry a sum of Rs. 50/- with him and on his way, he would talk to saint Mahatmas and the needy and the poor and listen to their requirements.

Whenever he found someone in genuine need, he would give him some cash from the money that he had brought along.

* * *

For celebration of GuruPurnima at Kshrnaben's home in Bilaspur, Gurudev had to come from Jarsukhda by train. There were about 30 devotees with him. On reaching the station, Gurudev realized that if he travelled by 1st class then the others, in order to be near him, would also do so and incur needless expenditure.

To avoid this, as soon as the train came on the platform, Gurudev boarded the 3rd class compartment and all followed suit. On their way they arrived at a small village, where a destitute beggar was asking for alms. His clothes were torn. All the devotees gave small coins ranging from 5 to 10 paisa. However before they could realized what was about to happen, Gurudev took off his half jacket and gave it to the beggar. The man was naturally overcome with tears of gratitude.

During that journey, when this incident occurred, there happened to be many rich and well to do among the devotees, wearing warm and comfortable jackets, but instead of praching to them the virtue of Charity, Gurudev actually demonstrated it by putting it in practice.

Truly

*"He that giveth unto the needy
receiveth much in the form gratitude."*

* * *

Strength of Faith

Chapter – 71

There was a family in Bombay and they were very devout and staunch followers of shri Gurudev. An youth of that family, on account of bad company, had turned into an atheist.

He wasted almost all his time roaming around with his vagabond friends though he had to appear for his annual examination. Thus he was obliged to go to the examination hall without proper preparations and as a last resort, he mentally surrendered unto shri Gurudev and took along with him a small photo of Poojyashri to the examination hall; then he took a look at the question paper with constant mental chanting of Gurudev's name. Since the Mathematics paper was tough, though he read again and again, he could not comprehend it.

Finally when he was totally confused, he placed Gurudev's photo on the floor and fully prostrated himself before it for full 2 minutes to the astonishment of all the professors and students in the hall. Then he got up and replaced the photo in his pocket.

Now to his surprise, he found that he knew answers to all the questions that were asked by the paper setter. He briskly went through the paper and solved all the problems.

When the results were declared, to everyone's and his own surprise, the student was named as top scorer in th class.

Truly,

*"We never know how high we are,
Till we are called to rise, (in devotion)
and then, if we are true to plan,
Our stature touch the skies."*

* * *

Grace on Nannu Maharaj**Chapter – 72**

At the time of the second eye camp in Guna, Nannu Maharaj was engaged for driving a Jeep. He was a Brahmin by caste, simple by nature, of frail body and slightly stooping forward. Being a Brahmin, the suffix Maharaj was added after his name.

Initially he used to procure cow's milk for Gurudev, and later by grace of Gurudev he was made the driver of the 'Hari Jeep'. On festive occasions Gurudev gave him sweets, fruits, clothes etc.

Maharaj used to remain on duty round the clock. He would do Gurudev's bidding even in the midst of night. Poojyashri had to travel at all hours of the day and Maharaj would drive him around. During a journey, whenever they halted he would unload the luggage and even get water from the well.

His major defect was his reckless driving, he would not slow down for the potholes on the road and at times he would apply the brakes suddenly and he would lose control over the steering.

Poojyashri would sit in the front seat beside the driver and show him the way as though the entire route was known to him. On outward journeys Nannuji could not remember anything though he had to return by the same route in a short while later.

Once in Gurudev kept absolutely quiet and Nannuji lost his way. Though he crisscrossed through lanes by lanes, he could not find his way back to their the Dharam Shala. Finally realizing his confusion, Gurudev looked aside and smiled. Now Nannuji asked Gurudev about the route, assuming a pose of mock seriousness, he said "You are going to Dharmshala every day since last two days and yet you cannot remember the proper route, now I will have to change the driver."

Maharaj replied with his characteristic simplicity and humility "Bhagwan ! In the morning, you bathe in the Ganges and in the evening you bathe in the Jamuna, how can I remember the route ?"

At this, Poojyashri could not control his laughter and said after a hearty laugh "Alright, hence forth you too can bathe in the Ganges and the Yamuna; this road will take us straight to the Dharam Shala" and he showed the correct route to Nannu Maharaj.

Once a crudely tied bag fell out from Nannu Maharaj's bedding. Poojyashri asked "What does this contain?" With tear filled eyes Nannuji replied "Bhagwan ! These are pieces of sweets and dry fruits that you gave as Prasad, I save it for my grand children, when I return home." And as he opened the satchel, pieces of sweet, dryfruits etc. swarming with ants, fell out from it.

Poojyashri became emotional and since that day, whenever Nannu Maharaj would go home on leave, Gurudev would send fresh fruits, sweets etc. for his grand children.

* * *

Salvation of a Troubled Spirit**Chapter – 73**

With blessings from Gurudev, Amlanibhai of Rajkot had shifted to Baroda. In Baroda he soon obtained a house as if it was lying vacant only for his use.

The house was very old and was infested by serpents and about 2 to 3 times a month they would see the frightening sight of a serpent. Out of sheer desperation and fright Amlanibhai appealed to Gurudev when he happened to visit Baroda, and said "Bapu ! I am greatly troubled by the snake and I can not sleep in peace." Gurudev replied in a firm tone "Amlani, do not worry, henceforth you will not see the snake" and from that day onwards the snake was never seen and even today, Amlanibhai stays in peace in that house.

* * *

At Warden road in Bombay, there used to be a beautiful squat bungalow, situated amidst a well maintained garden with magnificent marble statues placed all around. This reflected the artistic temperament of the owner. On the grounds of that bungalow, in due course, construction work of 'Surya Apartment' was to commence and at the request of Valjibhai, Gurudev had agreed to attend the foundation ceremony.

He came there on the night of 16-5-1964 and said "The owner of this bungalow has died here but his spirit is still wandering around in this premises, may God rest his soul in peace."

Next day, after the foundation ceremony was over, with a terrifying sound, a statue near the staircase broke into two pieces and Gurudev said "Well, now that restless spirit has been liberated."

Now everyone understood as to how that statue standing in total isolation, untouched by any one had exploded in this manner. Thus, due to the auspicious arrival of a saint, the wandering and restless soul had obtained it's liberation at last.

“Bapu !” Amlanibhai said “I was staying in this haunted bungalow since last one and a half month, I could never sleep in peace and so I used to keep your photo near my head during the night.”

Gurudev said “Amlani, you had the courage to stay here of 45 days but no other person in your place, could have stayed here even for one night” Amlanibhai bowed his head in gratitude and reverence.

* * *

Faith and Devotion**Chapter – 74**

On 5th September 1965, When war broke out with Pakistan, Gurudev, interrupting his 'solitary stay' at Virpur, started for Pathankot. Before his departure, he left a message for his devotees "This war is terrible and God alone can save our country, yet by his grace, things will subside by 19th."

Throughout the war, he stayed near the combat zone but none can say what he did. However, the war did end as predicted by him. Then he stayed in a village 'Kalayat' on Rajasthan Border. Gurudev had not taken any provisions for that journey, he managed only with a diet of seasonal fruits.

The mother of the manager of the Dharamshala in which he stayed, was a kind and devout lady. When she observed for several days that Gurudev was neither going out nor cooking any meals, she told Gurudev "Baba ! In this delicate health of yours, you should not remain without real food, I will prepare Chappati in milk and you will have to eat it".

At first Gurudev politely declined but he had to bow down before Mataji's love and said "Ma ! Please do not apply ghee to my Chappatis" when the dinner was ready, Ma sent word to him and spread a 'leaf plate' before him for dinner and from the big stack of Chappatis she took out his special Chappatis. She said "These are prepared in milk, and I kept them in the midst of the stack to preserve its softness."

Gurudev smiled Ma had, by placing the milk Chappatis among ordinary ones, had got them wilted at the edges. But as shri Ram ate those berries which were first tasted by Shabari, due to her extreme devotion, similarly Gurudev quietly finished the Chappatis as Ma looked on with approval and contentment.

* * *

Visit to the Jail**Chapter – 75**

Those shunned by society were the first to be adopted by Gurudev. If someone asked him about it, he would say "I am concerned for these people, for the simple reason that if Mahatmas began to despise them, they would have no one to turn to; they are mine and I am theirs."

On 1st June, 1966, Gurudev visited Rajkot Jail. At his Darshan, several prisoners wept with gratitude. Poojyashri said "I had a strong desire to meet you, and I am extremely pained to see you as prisoners. In fact, you alone are responsible for this condition. Forgetting your natural and self-reliant way of life you have misguidedly adopted these unlawful ways. The law can overpower us only when our minds are vitiated by bad thoughts. Be sorry for what you have done in the past and avoid bad company and after release from this place, lead a righteous life. I am sure that you will be able to build a bright new future for yourself."

"My prayers are that God will grant you happiness. My blessings will always be with you." When Poojyashri left the place, it seemed as though the prisoners were shedding tears of repentance at his feet.

* * *

Gurudev in Ganeshpuri**Chapter – 76**

At the loving and insistent invitation of shri Muktanandji Maharaj, Gurudev went to visit his Ashram at Ganeshpuri.

Muktanandji greeted him with pranam. Coincidentally shri Rang Avdhootji, along with his disciples had also come over there. Though Poojyashri had a persistent cough, he carried on the conversation pleasantly.

One of the disciples of shri Rangji started wondering to himself “Our Maharajshri says that Ranchhoddasji is a ‘Param Siddha Yogi’ yet his frail body and this nagging cough raises doubts.”

At that time shri Rangji spoke out “This is the same great saint and ‘Param Yogi’ about whom I have been telling you. You would hardly be able to recognise him, if it happened to meet him along the road. At the moment he is sizzling with fever and harassed by coughing fits and yet it is not a bodily illness as we know it; he is undergoing all these pains and sufferings, on account of having taken over pains and sufferings of others, whom he considered as his own.” With these words he laughed heartily.

Poojyashri joined in the laughter.

Indeed that meeting of Mahatmas was a memorable one.

* * *

Various aspects of Gurudev's personality.**Chapter – 77**

Gurudev's fame and the sphere of his work were expanding rapidly and thus he rarely found time to visit the surrounding villages of Chitrakoot. On such occasions when he find spare time for visits, he was obliged by the villager's insistant love to accept dinner and lunch invitations. At times from 15 to 17 homes per day. It was obligatory for him to have 3 Rotis and a cup of 'Dal' at each of the homes.

This process continued from morning to noon and occasionally he would be obliged to accept dinner invitations also. We could only wonder at such yoga induced tolerance of his body, for starving for days and then being able to eat (for the pleasure of these simple adoring souls), such unbelievable quantities, without any apparent ill effect on his health.

Perhaps, he could invoke 'Vaishwanar' (The God of digestion) and thus be able to undertake such super human feats.

* * *

Once while Poojyashri was inside his room in his daily "Neeyam" (Upasana) with closed doors, two friends had come to the Ashram for his Darshan, they sat there gossiping about defects of others. (Out side Gurudev's room). They got so carried away by their base pre-occupation that they lost all sense of place and time.

On opening the doors at the appointed hour, Gurudev came out of his room and said "One goes to a temple and offers flowers, this Ashram too is like a temple, where you should offer the flowers of your true devotion and not the gossip about others, good thoughts are essential to maintain sanctity of this place." Now both of them were crestfallen and humbly asked for forgiveness.

* * *

Incidents from Gurudev's life**Chapter – 78**

Influenced by Gurudev's piety and devoutness, the muslims of Banda, who were converts from Hinduism, wished to return to their original faith but were worried as to who would undertake the task of their re-conversion to Hinduism. Gurudev said "Do not worry, I will convert you to Hinduism.

The news that Gurudev was going to undertake this task after scriptural purification, spread far and wide and hundreds of muslims were ready for re-conversion to Hinduism. Both the Hindu and Muslim community were extremely agitated over the issue. Muslims being more angry, were the first to approach Gurudev, pacifying them Poojyashri explained "Please try to understand. Musalman means Musallam + Iman i.e. One who is firm in his faith. These people have already lost their faith in Islam, what would be the point in keeping them in your religion by mere compulsion?" The mullas walked off quietly.

The Hindus came next. Pacifying them Gurudev said "These people were once Hindus, with our own cultural and religious background, and if muslims have converted them merely by saying the word 'Bismillah', then don't you believe that our own 'Ram Mantra' is strong enough to bring them back to their original faith?" This left them speechless, and finally all those who voluntarily came forward were purified as prescribed by our scriptures and reconverted to Hinduism with proper ceremony.

* * *

Poojayashri was very particular about self help, dignity of labour and cleanliness. Once during a car journey, since the driver did not wash the car for three days, while the driver had gone elsewhere Poojayashri washed it himself, thereby setting an example for the driver.

Once when he was on a train journey with Thakorebhai, they had to change trains at Nagda Junction. Their train had just reached Nagda, and the connection train was about to leave within a few minutes. Thakorebhai shouted "Cooly-Cooly", but realizing the urgency of the

situation Gurudev carried all their luggage to the connecting train, even before Thakorebhai could realize as to what was happening. Had they waited even for a few seconds more for the coolie, then they would have missed the connecting train.

* * *

On festive occasions, devotees would bring large quantities of offerings and Gurudev would deal with them appropriately, Perishables like sweets etc. would be distributed among the devotees on the same day, fruits were sent for use by Mahatmas whereas dry fruits were given as 'Prasad' to devotees at the end of the day.

He treated every one on equal footing whether he was a king, minister, rich or poor and when the occasion so demanded, he would tell each one of them the truth on their face without fear or favour.

* * *

Clairvoyance of Gurudev**Chapter – 79**

In 1963, Poojyashri was travelling along with Mathuradasbhai from Pushkar towards Saurashtra. They were travelling at high speed and as usual Gurudev was in the front seat along with the driver. Suddenly he turned around and told Mathuradasbhai "Listen, even if a bomb explodes at your feet do not panic, nothing will happen to you" Mathuradasbhai acknowledged the instruction by offering pranam with folded hands.

On 5th September 1965, war brokeout with Pakistan and enemy planes bombed Jamnagar. The whole city was in panic, and well to do people shifted along with their families to interior towns like Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Surendra Nagar etc. The taxi fare to Rajkot which was formerly only Rs. 50/- now shot up to Rs.500/- and yet even at this rate, taxis were in short supply.

People started migrating by camelcarts, handcarts and nearly half the city was empty. Mathuradasbhai clearly remembered Gurudev's instructions and asked Valima and Bharat as to what should be done ? He quoted Gurudev's exact words and said "Bapu had told 2 years ago that even if a bomb explodes at your feet don't panic." Bharat asked with faith 'If Bapu spoke with such clear assurance then why should we panic ?' Yet Mathuradasbhai was shaken by doubts and could not remain quiet.

At that time Poojyashri was in Jalaram Bapa's Ashram at Virpur, he told Jaisukhram Bapa "Phone Mathurdas at Jamnagar and tell him to remember what I said 2 years ago and not to panic." But before such message could reach him, Mathuradasbhai had come to Virpur to be near Gurudev.

On meeting him, Gurudev asked "So, despite my assurance you could not maintain your mental peace ?"

Mathuradasbhai started mumbling in confusion. Gurudev stopped him and said "Since you have come, stay for another 10 days, because a doubting person perishes" Then turning to Bharat he asked "Is your college open or is it closed?" Bharat replied "Bapu! the college is still open". To this, Bapu replied "In that case you better return, and you can come here to visit your parents."

At last it was the faith of Bharat that prevailed. Poojyashri did not know the meaning of the word danger or fear. After Bharat's departure he told Girdhar Bapa "Though my health is indifferent, in this time of National crisis, it is improper for me to remain an idle spectator, I am going towards Pathankot."

Poojyashri went towards Jammu and Kashmir all by himself. On 13th, Jamnagar was bombed again but fortunately as instructed by Gurudev, Bharat had come to Virpur. After a stay of 10 days and with renewed faith in Gurudev's words Mathuradasbhai returned to Jamnagar. Later, Jamnagar was bombed again on 19th but on the same day the war came to an end.

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On 27-5-1964, The whole nation was shocked when Jawaharlal Nehru left this mortal world. At that time Poojyashri was in Pushkar and he knew of the event much in advance. When the sad news was actually conveyed to him, he asked for his diary, wherein was written in his own hand writing "On 27th Jawahar....."

Since people had faith that Gurudev could read the future, they asked "Bapu! who will be the next Prime Minister?" He replied, "You will know soon, but remember colour will prevail". After 2 days the name of the next P.M. was announced 'Lal (Red) Bahadur Shastri'.

Poojyashri observed with a smile "See as I said Red Colour has come".

Who could decipher his profound words?"

* * *

Next day on 28-5-64, Gurudev left Pushkar for Indore in 'Hari Jeep'. After a full day's journey, we were still travelling at night, searching for a Dak-bungalow for our overnight halt.

At 8-00 p.m. the lights of Shivpuri were visible from a distance, suddenly we saw a truck coming towards us at full speed, the culvert ahead was narrow and the truck driver having lost control, the truck collided with our jeep with a big bang and the vehicle went over the side of the road and came to halt with a severe jolt.

Gurudev, who was sitting along with Suresh in front seat, had his head dashed with the windshield glass and started bleeding. All of us got down from the car and in the light of the torch saw that Gurudev was hurt all over and bleeding from the nose, he had injuries on his hands and feet and his clothes were soaked with blood.

In that dense forest, all of us were out of our minds with anxiety and fear. Gurudev said, "First take care of Nannu Maharaj and Suresh." While Suresh was badly hurt on the chest by the steering, Nannu Maharaj had a deep gash on his back. They said 'First save the Savior of Lacs' Suresh carried Gurudev to the road side on his back and a passing bus, seeing the accident, gave us lift and drove straight to the Shivpuri Hospital compound. Gurudev was admitted to a separate room and after stopping the bleeding, the doctor wanted to give an injection to make him sleep. Gurudev said "There is no need for injection, if you want me to sleep, I will sleep." And he gently closed his eyes and fell asleep. The doctor could not believe that any one with such injuries could sleep without an injection, yet on hearing Gurudev's gentle snoring, he left in wonder.

Jamnadasbhai and Bhogibhai came from Indore and Guna where the news was conveyed. While Gurudev was being shifted to Indore, in the ambulance, he asked for his diary in which he had written in advance "28th May is bad for me."

* * *

On 10-1-66, when Gurudev was in Ujjain Dharmshala in the evening, he said with a sad face "Just see what the Tashkent Radio says." At that time Lalbahadurji had gone there for post war peace pact with Pakistan. Anilbhai asked "Should I go home and listen to the radio."

Gurudev replied, "That is not necessary, tomorrow all will know when people start screaming." No one understood, but next day the sad news was being broadcast from the radio that shri Lalbahadur Shashtri expired on account of heart attack at 1-30 a.m. in the night at Tashkent. Now all of us understood the significance of Gurudev's sadness yesterday evening. That was the last day in Shashtriji's life.

When the news was conveyed to him, Gurudev said "Indeed it is sad that Shashtriji has left us; but that was destiny. He was Lal (son) of Bharat, Bahadur (Brave) as well as a Shashtri (A learned man) Indeed.

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Result of my disobedience**Chapter – 80**

While Poojyashri was in Ujjain, since my brother Anil's wedding was drawing nearer, we left Ujjain by car for Bombay. Gurudev advised "There is chance of an accident today, so do not drive after 7-00 p.m. in the evening." On reaching Sendhwa, we stopped for tea, the watch showed 10 minutes to 7-00 p.m. though I remembered Gurudev's warning, fate misguided me and clouded my judgement.

After a while, in dim light, while we were mounting Khal-ghati, the driver lost control over the steering and the car went out of control and took 4 to 5 circles and we felt the entire world spinning around us.

With trembling heart a scream escaped my lips, "Baba ! Control the car" "He Ram !" "He Gurudev !" Right then the car struck a nearby rock with terrifying force and came to a jerky halt. The car was a total loss. On the other side was a deep valley, what if the car had gone there and gone down the valley ? When I glanced at the watch it was 7-10 p.m.

I was extremely sorry for having ignored Gurudev's warning. With great effort I alighted from the car, and with the driver's help carried Anil and made him lie down on the road side. I was alone in a strange place and was extremely agitated, but by the grace of Gurudev, a truck stopped at our request, and the driver loaded our luggage and drove towards Sendhwa. On the way he procured a large glass of milk for Anil and made him drink it.

We drove straight to the hospital and the cleaner called the doctor and after unloading our luggage, when he was about to drive away the driver offered me namaskar with folded hands. I opened my purse and tried to give him a fistful of currency notes.

He replied "Bahenji ! I have verily performed my duty, nothing more," and he drove away, without taking note of the amount that I intended to give him.

At 11-00 p.m. in the night, I phoned Balubhai in Ujjain narrating the whole incident and told him to inform Gurudev only next morning. But Balubhai's wife Kamlaben went to the Dharamshala immediately and Poojyashri was still awake. On hearing the news he took Omkarbhai along with him and started for Sendhwa.

Though I had disobeyed his instructions, Gurudev made his title 'Din Dayal' (Comforter of afflicted and needy) come true. At 3-00 A.M., there was a knock on the door and Omkarbhai spoke "Damuben, open the door, Maharajshri has come."

Gurudev entered and without a word of rebuke, he went straight to Anil, who was almost unconscious and fondled his head with a loving hand. I can not express my mental state of that time through the inadequate medium of mere words.

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Geeta Devi's mental Reveries**Chapter – 81**

In 1966, at the loving persuasion of GirdharRam Bapa, Gurudev stayed at Virpur for rest and solitude. The farm house where he stayed was about 3 miles away from town.

Every morning GirdharRam Bapa would go there along with his family for Darshan, and after ceremonial Puja, he would make offerings to Gurudev. During this period it was decided that Gurudev would visit Porbunder, and what happened there is narrated here in Geetaben's own words :-

On the sacred soil of Porbunder, and in the presence of Gurudev, the foundation ceremony of the 'Andh Gurukul' was to be performed. The eager population was all eyes for Gurudev's arrival and several famous personalities came to Virpur to escort Gurudev to Porbunder. While preparations were being made for the Porbunder visit, I thought "How nice would it be, if Gurudev ordered me to come along" but how to ask him in this crowd ? While I was thus lost in thought, Gurudev called me and said "You better take your seat in the car."

At Porbunder, Poojyashri was to be the guest of Vallabhbhai, of M/s. Bhanji Lovji Gheewala. He rested for the night. Next morning at 8-00 a.m., he went to the foundation ceremony, there were the Maharana of Porbunder, shri Nanjibhai Mehta and other dignitaries and they were seated appropriately. The ceremony concluded on a joyous note and shri Nanjibhai requested Gurudev to address the gathering. Poojyashri gave a short speech on "Duties towards humanity and service to it."

After the function, Gurudev went to Vallabhbhai's house. At noon the trustees of 'Geeta Mandir' Porbunder, came to invite Gurudev and requested him to pay a visit to their institution. Despite indifferent health,

he agreed to go there at 5-00 p.m. After the Trustees had gone, glancing in my direction he said "Today Geeta will give her discourse in Geeta Mandir."

I spoke with courage but with due humility "Bhagwan! I won't give discourse." He laughed and said "Look at her, Geeta is refusing to give discourse in Gita Mandir," then added smilingly "I won't listen to your excuses, you will have to deliver the discourse."

I wondered, was this an order or an act of grace? As the evening approached, my agitation increased, perhaps he was verily joking when he spoke about my discourse and by now he must have forgotten.

As if in response to my thoughts, while we were leaving for Gita Mandir in the evening, he reminded me "Listen, you will have to give the discourse, don't refuse in public."

I felt contrite at my silly thoughts that he might have forgotten, now I truly started searching for the topic for the discourse. Even the most accomplished speakers would stumble in their speech in the presence of Gurudev, then let alone my humble self. Finally I decided to speak on "Divine Attributes."

After having Darshan, I entered the hall. Gurudev beckoned me to come nearer. My mind was permitted with the topic of my speech and the hall was packed to capacity and there was pindrop silence. At the request of the trustees, Gurudev delivered his pravachan :-

"Nowadays we do a lot for the blind, such as welfare centers etc. This morning we had the foundation ceremony of 'Gurukul for the blind'. Eye camps are organized by devotees for the benefit of the blind. All these are good deeds but we must do something for those who are blind inspite of having both eyes. This is mental blindness due to Anger, Greed and desires. We must do something to remove such blindness."

Doctors can remove the cataract and cure a person of physical blindness but God alone can save us from a person blinded by Anger, Greed of desires. To remove such blindness from our society, the Lord has shown the characteristics of 'Divine attributes' in the 16th chapter of Geeta, and now Geeta will explain those attributes to you."

I was completely immerse in listening to Gurudev, how lucidly he had explained the mental blindness. But I was pleasantly surprised the thought that Gurudev could read my mind and know about the topic on which I had decided to speak.

Honouring his instruction, I began my pravachan and continued with clarity as though I was a mere radio cabinet through the medium of which Gurudev's views being transmitted to the assembled audience.

Truly, God's name 'Antaryami' (knower of our thoughts) is not in vain.

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Famine relief in Orissa.

Chapter – 82

Due to poor monsoon of 1965, the Orissa famine of '66 was at its' worst. The interstate boundaries created by politicians, hampered smooth movement of food from surplus state to deficient state. Thus the man made scarcity was aggravated by natural calamity. Questions were raised in parliament but without results.

In matter of food, Orissa is a deficient state and the famine aggravated people's suffering beyond endurance. People were emaciated due to lack of nourishment and in the absence of edible food they would eat leaves and mahuda. The poverty and starvation reached such a stage that the hungry aborigines would kill birds, insects and even serpents to feed themselves.

Despite all efforts, the figure of starvation deaths was mounting. All this was printed in newspapers and was a matter of public knowledge and yet the power drunk politicians could do nothing to solve the acute problem. The Christian missionaries, taking advantage of the situation, started relief work to propagate conversion.

The poor starving aborigines welcomed the missionaries and were willing to trade their religion for the price of survival and get converted to Christianity.

At such a time, Gurudev sacrificed his restful solitary stay at Virpur and sent out messages to Bombay, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Indore and Chitrakoot to devotees to come forward and fight the Orissa famine.

By a happy coincidence, the Congress working committee session was being held in Bombay and at Gurudev's inspiration Keshubhai and Vallabhbai met the Orissa Chief Minister shri S. Tripathi in Bombay and spoke to him about the famine, assuring him that they will not ask for any other assistance except non interference by Govt. agencies in their relief work. The C.M. was extremely happy and agreed to procure for them, food grains and bldg. materials for the camp at controlled prices.

After arranging all this, both Vallabhbhai and Keshubhai met Gurudev at Virpur.

At that time Poojyashri was extremely indisposed yet he sat up for 3 hours and explained all preliminaries about the relief work to the devotees, such as how to economize on efforts, time, expenses, food grains etc. He also suggested to them that as a precaution to prevent the adivasis from selling away food grains for drinks, they should be given cooked meals only. He got prepared a list of grains, edible oils, spices etc which would be needed over there.

After dispatching Vallabhbhai and Keshubhai to Orissa, Poojyashri himself prepared to join them and GirdharRam Bapa gave a handsome amount for the project and his second son Batukbhai was also to join in the relief work.

In the extreme heat of Saurashtra, Gurudev travelled from village to village and the devotees agreed to offer their services physically, mentally and in the form of cash contributions to the maximum extent. Before leaving Saurashtra, Gurudev told them :-

“The missionaries are exploiting this calamity to tempt the famine stricken hungry people with food money to convert them to Christianity. By working over there, we will be able to perform 3 fold services (i) ‘Anna-Yagna’ (ii) Service of Humanity and (iii) Defence of our religion. But never think, even for a moment, that you are going to provide food for the hungry and helpless people but always think that through service to them God has given you an opportunity to atone for your past deeds, and thus by coming to your camp to accept your services, these people are in fact obliging you.

Do not give donation to please others, because even a Rupee given with love is better than a big amount given on account of compulsion.” “Always think of the people who come to you as your brothers and sisters or guests. Be kind and compassionate to them and never insult anybody. Do not forget that you are not going there for rest and respite but for giving solace and relief to others. The money collected for the good cause should be spent with as much economy and thrift as if it was our own money earned by the sweat of our brow.”

The first camp commenced by 16-6-1966 in Sorda in Sundergadh Dist., here the famine was so intense and horrifying that no voluntary organization had dared to come. The name given to the undertaking was "Orissa food relief committee."

On the inaugural day 'Shira' was prepared. Some of the volunteers came from such rich families that they never had to fetch a glass of water for themselves and yet all of them had left their comfortable homes at the words 'Let's Go' spoken by Gurudev. They would do such hard work like drawing water from wells, lifting sackful of grains, erecting tents, cutting vegetables, serving food and leveling ground with pickaxes and shovels, without consideration of day or night.

Camps were also started at Chandi post, Jambli and Kemblang. Poojyashri's headquarters was at Rourkela but he could go there hardly once in every 5 days. Rourkela was 21, 54 and 70 miles respectively from Sorda, Jambli and Kemblang. All of them were located in remote places and deep forest, with hardly any road to reach them, despite having a car, one had to walk and cross several Nallas and streams.

Sorda was only 8 miles from Navagaon station and yet when it rained, the slippery mud made it necessary to alight from the Jeep and one could proceed further only after providing traction for the wheels by filling up the potholes with stones and tree branches. The job of delivering provisions to all the camps was very difficult yet the volunteers worked with untiring zeal. The staple diet of Orissa is rice and therefore the meals prepared in each camp consisted of Rice, Dal and Vegetables.

Every center catered to about 5000 people and time needed to prepare meals for such large numbers was such that only one meal per day could be served. Their appetite was beyond our imagination, one bucketful of cooked rice would hardly suffice for 3 people. They could come for meals at any time between 11-00 a.m. to 4-00 p.m. To reach the camp for their meals, many walked over distances of 4 to 5 miles from their villages.

The Govt. officials who came from time to time, wondered how meals could be provided for so many people at one time.

All the camps were in dense forest, infested by poisonous things such as scorpions and snakes and dangerous beasts like tigers. The volunteers, on occasions would find a black scorpion in their bedding when they would be preparing to retire for the night. But despite all the dangers inherent as mentioned in such places, by Gurudev's grace, none came to any harm.

At the camp, some of the Adivasis would eat a square meal and then try to take along eatables wrapped up in leaf plates surreptitiously for their next meal. Once a hot headed volunteer snatched such a bundle from an Adivasi's hand amidst angry exchange of words. When Poojyashri came to know about it in Rourkela, he admonished solemnly "Never be thrifty in feeding, go around and announce that the people were not to take away any food, but despite this, if some body still does so, don't stop him. After all they are our guests and they are to be served by us, we are not obliging them but they are obliging us. We ought to be able to provide two meals, which we are unable to do and therefore if they carry away eatables for the second meal then in effect they are saving us the labour of cooking the next meal. Therefore never humiliate them."

In Chandipost Gurupurnima was celebrated with joy and everyone who came for the meal was given stitched clothes and saris and Dhotis.

The people here, though lazy, were honest; if someone got 2 pairs erroneously, he would come and return one of them. For 4 months, during the camp, an incessant stream of donations poured in as if the donors were vying with one another. As soon as enough funds were collected, all were requested to stop sending donations. Some money orders had to be returned. Perhaps this was the first relief organization that had to publish in news papers :- "Please do not send any more donations to Orissa food relief Committee."

Devotees from Bombay, Calcutta, M.P. Kutch, Saurashtra and Mahatmas of Chitrakoot gave their whole hearted services in the camp and it continued for 4 months till the new harvest reached homes.

On the last day, Gurudev said "As a thin piece of string could do nothing but when spun together as a thick cord it can even be used to tie-up the mighty elephant; similarly, without your whole hearted co-ordinated efforts, I could not have done anything. You have turned the impossible into possible."

After announcing closure of the camp from 15th October, while volunteers were packing and loading their luggage on trucks, at the usual meal time, they saw thousands flocking towards them and they told them "As announced before, there will be no meals hence forth." They said with tearful eyes. "Sarkar ! We did not come for meals. For the last 4 months you have been providing meals and with your ceaseless toils you have saved our lives, now that you are going back to your homes we have come to express our gratitude and to bid good bye to our saviours.."

Thus overwhelmed by the love of these simple souls, the volunteers unloaded and unpacked their luggage and lovingly prepared that day's meal and after serving the same to them, they once again boarded the waiting trucks. On their part, the adivasis, with tearful eyes, kept on waving their farewells till the departing trucks could be seen.

By organizing camp in this dense forest, Poojyashri not only did 'Anna dan' but he also did 'Sanskriti dan'. As a result, thousands of potential converts to Christianity were retained in our ancient fold to Chant 'Ram-Nam'.

Indeed such an infinite stream of humanitarianism could achieve even the apparently impossible.

Poojyashri's work demonstrates to all of us that unlike the barren rumbling of clouds, the lightning spreads its luster instantaneously; similarly instead of dry discourses on religion, performance of solid good deeds could attract more people towards religion and they would then remain steadfast in their renewed faith.

Truly.

*"An ounce of action speaks
Louder than a ton of words."*

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Relief work in Bihar**Chapter – 83**

During the next year in 1967, there was a terrible famine in Bihar. The past 2 to 3 years were also lean years and with passage of time, conditions became so severe that if timely relief was not provided then entire Palamu Dist. Would perish on account of starvation. It appeared that in this battle, humanity had started losing ground, but when the hungry people seemed ready to sell their hunger and obtain food by renouncing Hinduism, Humanity gave out a piercing scream.

Being unable to bear this agony and remembering Gurudev's work in Orissa, JayPrakash Narayan spoke to Gidhubhai Kotak. He in turn spoke to Gurudev in Bombay "Jayprakashji strongly urges you to visit Bihar and save the suffering humanity by organizing relief work."

Poojyashri replied with a smile "Tell Jayprakashji that we are ready, provided he can arrange for Rs.9 lacs as seed capital, with that to begin with, God willing, we will be able to carry out work worth Rs. 50 lacs."

On his departure, Gurudev called Keshubhai, Kanubhai and Babubhai and told them "Our duty calls us to Bihar even if he is not able to provide the money, Lord shri Ram will help us in completing our mission. We just have to lift our humble stick to lift 'Govardhan', God will do the rest, so be ready when I send out the call."

How could Gurudev rest in peace when the ailing humanity was calling out for help ? Were it not for the grim situation in Bihar, the story of Rs. 9 lacs could provide a comic relief.

When the matter was conveyed to Jayprakashji, he said in despair "How can I arrange for such a large sum ?" Now Gidhubhai spoke to Dhebarbhai, who said "I will send my secretary to Smt. Indira Gandhi to arrange for the sum from Prime Minister's relief fund." But they were disappointed and finally Dhebarbahai spoke to shri Arvindbhai of Mafatlal Group.

When the nation cries out in such agony some 'Bhamasha' comes forward and opens the gates of his treasures. But some past memory of mismanagement of funds stifles the sentiments of such a donor. Perhaps similar feeling and past experience made Arvindbhai to say "Tell your Babaji, for now, we can manage only Rs. 5 lacs, let him commence work, the rest will be collected later."

Gidhubhai and Dhebarbhai went to Kathpadi in the south to Gurudev and the plans for the relief work were finalized. On 6th February, Gurudev reached Bombay and on the same day they met at Devkaranbhai's house and under his chairmanship, amidst the crowd of devotees, the 'Manav Rahat Mandal' was duly constituted.

Next day Dharamshibhai of Khatau mills came along with Sumatiben Morarji of scindia steam navigation and placing a cheque for Rs. 1 lac at Gurudev's feet, he said, "This is the first time that I have on my own come out to donate, though many institutions and trusts lineup at my house in expectation of donation."

This was a result of Gurudev's fame and a life which was the highest form of renunciation.

From Bombay, Pooyashri went to Saurashtra via Rajkot, where he addressed a gathering on "Sarvadharmā." He went to several other places and told his disciples to come to Bihar for relief work.

Then via Gondia, he returned to Bombay where he met Arvindbhai for the first time. They had discussions about the relief works. Shri Krishnashankar Shashtriji also called upon Gurudev to invite him for a function in Ahmedabad. (The details are in next chapter.)

The 'Anna-Kshetra' commenced in Ranka on 18-3-1967. Meals were served to 7000 hungry people.

Despite the initial enthusiasm, dark clouds of despair descended on the camp in 5 days only. A sizeable portion of the money was already spent on construction and preliminary work of the camp and additionally just two days back, 2 new camps were being organized, in Chinia and Shikshika, thereby the number of diners had gone upto 20,000 per day. The problem of drinking water was such that cooking water was required to be brought by motorized tankers from a distance of 15 to 16 miles

and this involved huge daily expense in thousands on fuel. The number of outstanding bills for purchases made, was mounting.

On the night of the 22nd, Poojyashri glanced at the figures of income and expenditure and gauged the whole problem in a moment. Expenditure of thousands per day and limited amount of incoming donations. The camp was yet to continue for another 7 months and this was merely the 5th day. For a moment his face was clouded with agitation. The question "Now what?" was nagging everyone.

Suddenly his composed and calm voice rang out in the room, "None should worry, God will do our work, let no one come to my room tonight." Saying thus he left the room, as though absentmindedly.

That night Gurudev's lone and sad voice calling to God "He Ram" reverberated through the night, creating vibrations even beyond the ashram and the camp premises. In a moment, as though travelling over a distance of hundreds of miles it reached Bombay and shri Arvindbhai Mafatlal sleeping in his comfortable A.C. bedroom woke up with a sudden start; As though some one was telling him "wake up Arvind ! This is not the time to sleep, the ailing humanity of Bihar is calling, this is the time to go and be with Babaji."

Inspite of all comforts, he could not go back to sleep for the rest of the night. In the morning his secretary Mr. Dagli wired to the relief camp "Arvindbhai will reach Ranka by plane via Calcutta and Ranchi" As scheduled, Arvindbhai reached the camp on 24th. He took survey of the entire camp and was very much impressed by the arrangements, organization, management and efficiency under the benign guidance of Gurudev. This feeling was further heightened at the Darshan of Gurudev.

He promptly undertook to deliver 4000 quintals of food grains and offered a cheque for Rs. 1.50 lacs at Gurudev's feet. He further offered to send 10000 Sarees and equal number of Dhotis and after offering pranam he went to visit Chinia and Shikshika camps.

Gurudev kept on repeating "Ramji is there" and all present were choked with tears of emotion. This incident provides to the world the best example of devotion to shri Ram, and total surrender unto the will of God, and how the Lord comes to the help of such devotees.

We may also conclude that Gurudev had merged his entire being in shri Ram by taking 'Karma Sanyas' for one night and thereby shaken the entire existence of Arvindbhai and thus God had placed before the world an example of the supreme powers of 'Yoga-Shakti'.

* * *

Through the medium of News papers, the whole country knew that shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj had organized a huge relief camp at Ranka. His selfless service in Orissa had made him known in towns, cities and villages. Due to this, Money orders of small and large amounts were pouring in. From among the devotees of Poojyashri, who were not so well to do, sent donations of small sums of money, saved from a day's meal, a movie ticket, a day's income or by giving up bidies.

Shri Dongreji Maharaj conducted a Bhagwat Saptah in Rajkot and sent an amont of Rs. 60,000/-, collected thereby for the relief work in Bihar to Gurudev.

* * *

To participate in Ram Navmi celebrations and for Gurudev's Darshan, Arvindbhai arrived with his family. After a while he asked Poojyashri "What are the needs of the camp ?, do not worry about expenses."

With a smile Gurudev replied softly "We need 22000 quintals of food grains" conceding this with folded hands Arvindbhai asked "Baba ! What else?"

"Clothes to cover the poor."

"what further Babaji ?"

"Hessian for the camp which is incomplete."

"Baba anything else ?"

"Big cooking utensils."

"What else is needed Babaji ?"

Now Poojyashri gazed at Arvindbhai himself, meaningfully and with unwavering eyes. The devotees present became speechless at this exchange of words and they intuitively realized that finally only one thing remained to be asked from Arvindbhai who had come out of the test like Gold of 100 touch fineness, after being totally purified by the fire of Gurudev's commands and that thing was 'Arvindbhai himself.'

Though Gurudev had not put it in so many words, yet when Arvindbhai bowed at his feet in an attitude of complete surrender along with all material things, it was obvious from his behavior that he had conceded this unspoken command of Poojyashri. Everyone in the camp was full of praise for his faith, devotion and attitude of self dedication.

When Arvindbhai came next day to ask for permission to go to Bombay, Poojyashri explained to him the divine greatness of charity and added "Arvind ! I can say under solemn oath that whatever you give shall return to you in enhanced form very soon. This is not mere donation of food but salvation of souls. Among thousands who will be taking meals over here, even if there be one truly deserving person, then this donation like the arrows of shri Ram will multiply itself in form of 'Punya' and protect you like an invincible armour in the times of your 'Agni-pariksha!'

* * *

Now since there was no shortage of provisions, Gurudev would regularly go to the mass kitchen and dispatch cooked food by trucks at appropriate time, to Shikshika, Barwadi and other camps.

* * *

The cooking furnace at Ranka was a thing of gigantic proportions, big enough to swallow about 50 people and it burnt for 24 hours.

Once while helping to get down a large sized utensil, from the furnace, Anandibhai of Saraiya lost his balance and fell in the roaring fire!

There was terror on every face but miraculously Anandibhai got thrown out that furnace with the same force with which he had fallen in. All were wonder struck at the fact that not a hair on his body was singed by the fire, as though even the 'Agni Devta' (God of fire) paid his homage to this benevolent and selfless service.

In this very camp, after Arvindbhai, Rambhai joined as a disciple. Having read glowing praise of the kitchen conducted by 'Manav Mandal' in news papers, he decided to be of some service. During this period, on the occasion of the marriage of his brother Haribhai's son Mahendra, he convinced the bride's side to keep the ceremony as simple as possible and send the savings of Rs. 10,000/- to Gurudev, who expressed his

joyous sentiment with the words that if all the well to do people put their savings to such meritorious use then it would be of immense benefit to the poor.

As his attraction for Bihar increased, Rambhai came to the camp to be of physical service on the occasion of Gurupurnima. Gurudev entrusted to him the work of management and distribution of clothes. Observing his devotion, dedication and eagerness to obey, as a disciple, Gurudev told him "Ram ! I may leave others but I will never leave you." Seeing Gurudev's grace and love for him, Rambhai took a spot decision to dedicate his life to service and selflessness and stayed at Ranka till the very end.

* * *

Since the donations received were exempt from Income Tax, meticulous accounts had to be maintained for scrutiny by the Charity Commissioner. This work was entrusted to Amubhai Vasani. In addition, he was in charge of purchase, delivery etc. He used to say "I am a semiliterate person and in my business I used to make mistakes in accounting of ground nuts, but in Ranka, due to grace of Gurudev, there has been no mistake even of a pie.

* * *

Bihar Govt. had started a 'Gau-shala' over there but when the rains commenced, they closed up the same. When Gurudev came to know of this he said "As yet grass has not come out of the ground and they have walked off, what would the Gau Matas eat ?" Then he called Jasabhai and Purushottambhai and entrusted them with the work and added "Along with the cows feed the bullocks also, if the bullocks are weak, how will these people till their fields ?"

The Gaushala was started in a mango orchard, wagons of cattle fodder were ordered and watering places were built. Daily five to seven hundred cows would gather and on the note of the village 'Mukhia' the farmers were given fodder for their bullocks. The work continued till the new grass sprouted out of the ground.

* * *
* * *

Along with 'Anna-yagna', an eye camp was also organized at Ranka and 2500 operations were performed.

Without anyone coming to any harm, the furnaces burnt for 7 months. Everyday, ignoring the Christian missions, 30 to 35 thousand people took meals. Due to grace of Gurudev, there were ample rains in that season and record crop (unprecedented in past 50 years) could be harvested.

Thus by grace of Gurudev, Biharis were saved from starvation and death and also retained by not getting converted to Christianity on account of temptation of food.

* * *

On conclusion of the camp, shri Krishna Shanker Shastriji says about Gurudev "The world has seen only one man, who took personal pains, so that help could reach only to the deserving persons and the name of that great man is shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj.

* * *

Bapu used to say "This is not famine but festival to enable you to spend your wealth for a deserving cause. These are not hungry mortals but God himself in whose mouth you feed the 'Aahutis like in an yagna. The one puts a mouthful in another's mouth is Ram, whereas the one who eats up ten person's food is Ravana".

Like the sandal wood, Bapu's body was meant for use to give service and solace to others, it was not made of mortal elements but of divine ones.

In the 'Sat-yug' the Gods and the Devils performed Churning of ocean and Goddess Laxmi took incarnation with 'Arvind' [a Lotus].

Similarly when the sea of the Bihar calamity was troubling him. Gurudev's firm dedication produced Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth with Arvind, a Lotus like worthy disciple:-

Truly it has been said :-

"Sublime is the domination of the mind over the body, that which makes the flesh impregnable and strings the sinews like steel, so that the weak become so mighty."

* * *

Founding of Shri Bhagwat Vidyapith

Chapter :- 84

As we saw in the previous chapter, during his transit stay in Bombay, shri Krishnashankar Shashtriji came to meet Gurudev and we can learn about the happenings in poojya Shashtriji's own words :-

The foundation ceremony of shri Bhagwat Vidyapith was to be on 13-3-67, by the auspicious hands of shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj, I wrote to him requesting for a meeting. He replied through the messenger "Tell Shashtriji he need not come all the way to Madras (At that time Gurudev was over there), I will meet him myself, wherever he is. Later when I got the news that he had come to Bombay at Devkaranbhai's place, I went over there to invite him for the function. He said "Why did you take the trouble, I would have met you myself" I replied with humility "If the father comes in search of a son, would the son not rush to him ?" at this he smiled as well as became emotional.

Maharajshri was visiting Rajkot via Ahmedabad on 25-2-67 and then he was to go to Bihar to start relief work. I requested him "Since you will be in Ahmedabad on your way to Rajkot, kindly halt there, perform the ceremony and then you can proceed to Bihar to avoid coming all the way back on 13-3-67." He replied "If the ceremony is scheduled for 13-3-67 it must be done on that day only." He told me to write down the date on piece of paper and I did so.

"I hope you will come," I asked. He replied stressing his promise thrice "I will come." I wondered how he will come all the way from Bihar, leaving such an important undertaking and within such a short span of time.

On the appointed day (One day in advance of the ceremony), we were waiting for his arrival since morning. Suddenly sketchy news were received tha Maharajshri had reached Dakore.

About 2000 devotees had vowed not to take food or water till they had his Darshan. At night the trustees of the Vidyapith asked me "How can you guarantee that Bapu will surely attend ?"

I replied "It is only 12-00 in the night, our ceremony is at 10-00 a.m tomorrow, you better ask me then, If he is not able to reach, my 'Tapasya', would be in vain, but the 'Tapasya' of these 2000 devotees will surely bring him to us."

Exactly within 20 minutes, the phone rang with a message from Damodarbai saying, "Bapu had arrived and that we need not worry." Gurudev had started from Ranka on 9th by car but there was engine trouble and on the way he had to pass the day below a tree for several hours in the scorching heat in the open.

On reaching Ahmedabad, he discussed sufferings of the Biharis till 2-30 a.m. in the night. We served him with milk but he just took a spoonful in order to please us, and lay down so that we too may follow suit and have some sleep.

As though he had never really gone to sleep, he got up at 4-30 a.m. and again discussed Bihar till 7-30 a.m. and we reached the foundation ceremony site at 8-00 a.m.

He ceremoniously did the foundation 'Vidhi' and performed the puja for the 'Kalp Taru' hall of the 'Bhagwat Vidyapith.'

The ceremony was over by noon and at 2-00 p.m. Poojyashri was ready to leave for Bihar. I asked him "Would you travel in such noon heat?" He replied "Compared to Bihar, this heat is nothing, Now please let me depart" and placing his benign hand on my head and back he said "Listen, do not delay the work, after all it is shri Ram's work and therefore in God's work there should be no delay."

Thus, just in order to fulfill the promise given to Shashtriji, Gurudev undertook the arduous car journey from Ranka to Ahmedabad, a distance of nearly 1800 kilometers though he was preoccupied with the life saving battle for the relief of stricken people of Bihar.

Indeed the deeds of saints and their endurance and will power are beyond the comprehension of mere mortals like us.

* * *

The Bharatpur floods

Chapter – 85

Before the conclusion of relief work in Ranka, severe rains in U.P. flooded the rivers and on account of damage to the dams, Mathura, Bharatpur and other towns were in the grip of floods. Poojyashri remarked with sadness "The country is now like a torn old cloth, if you sew it up at one spot, it tears off even wider at another."

The condition of flood affected people was pitiable. All their possessions and homes were soaked in water. Shivering with cold, people had stayed on terraces of their homes, without food, waiting for the flood waters to reced. Food grains and blankets were urgently needed. Gurudev sent Rambhai to Bombay for purchasing clothes and Chhelubhai and other volunteers were sent to Bharatpur with truck and jeep.

The streets were having knee dip water and slush; and thus it was impossible to deliver provisions to stranded people by jeep or truck. As a temporary measure, people were issued cards whereby they could obtain their provisions from the camps established at Kumber, Pahadi Jurera and Kamvan. They were instructed to obtain their requirements of wheat, clothes etc. from the nearest centre. After conclusion of Ranka camp, Gurudev came to Kumber, then he went to Mathura with Rambhai and met Arvindbhai, Madhubhai and others. Since Gurudev had reached Mathura on Sharad Purnima, on his instruction, milk and Pauwa were prepared for offering to Lord Krishna at Vishram Ghat by the hands of Arvindbhai.

In the night, Gurudev explained the essence of 'Raas Lila'; and added "If an ordinary yogi like me can assume two forms, no wonder that Lord Krishna assumed as many forms as there were Gopis." The Bharatpur relief work continued for 7 weeks and Gurudev returned to Chitrakoot via Bombay.

* * *

Teachings of Gurudev**Chapter – 86**

In Chitrakoot, Gurudev was surrounded by a huge crowd of devotees. He kept on smiling even in that suffocating atmosphere and told Vedbhai "See these are my fellow workers, who are all pure of heart and they render selfless services. Though they may be poor by material standards yet on the basis of their generosity they are indeed rich. They give a gift of one rupee from their meager earnings and they invariably send some portion from their harvest for 'Sadhu-Seva.'

After some time Valima arrived with family, she performed Aarti and offered him a new dress. Gurudev remarked "Valima is giving me a new dress, how nice it would be if I could similarly get a new body." He continued "Listen, since what we wear is meant for others, select your dress according to their choice, but since what you eat concerns only you and no one else, select your food according to your natural inclination and what is most suited for your own physical well being."

* * *

On the occasion of his birthday on Kartik Shud Chaturthi he addressed the gathering of devotees thus :-

"On this occasion, when you are all gathered here to greet me and make offerings. I feel like making offerings to you but since we have got to follow the code of conduct prescribed by the scriptures, we will stick to the routine.

However it is your duty as disciples to discard the demonic inclinations from your minds and to adopt the divine ones.

Our birth in this human form is on account of our past good deeds, and therefore in order to retain ourselves this form, it is essential that we do more good deeds now and accumulate merits. Good deeds are result of good thoughts, and our thoughts in turn are influenced by the company that we keep, therefore, it would indeed be good for us to have 'Sat-Sang' (Company of the virtuous) at all times and pray every day. Prayers from the heart can never be in vain.

God manifests himself in pure and virtuous hearts. By himself, man is nothing. He is what he is on account of his circumstances and the good and virtuous qualities are attained by good deeds and good deeds are preformed by us on account of the company of the virtuous, which in turn can be got only by the grace of God and that is obtained by complete surrender unto him. Therefore, if you wish to rise to a higher plane of spirituality, surrender yourself unto God and chant 'Ram-Nam' discarding your Ego, because so long as you have your Ego, God will continue to ignore you." "Just pray resolutely" –

"We accept thy will as our own" "And then you will receive inspiration as and when needed and advance on the spiritual path and experience that some divine force is constantly pulling you towards it to a higher and higher plane."

"Presently our country is passing through a difficult phase and the only remedy seems to be to do Jap of 'Ram-Nam.' In order to preserve our ancient culture and heritage, all of us will have to put in herculean efforts."

* * *

Once, while addressing the devotees, Gurudev said, "This feeling of 'Mine' and 'Thine' arises out of our hopes and strong desires and we act under their influence."

"The commonly practiced yogic kriyas like 'Neti', 'Dhoti', 'Basti' are merely means to an end. For true Yoga, a strong sense of inquisitiveness is essential, and one must also be a deserving person. The means for salvation are given to each individual disciple so as to suit his temperament, But none wants to undergo hardships, all of us want to attain everything merely by 'Gurukripa' (Grace of Guru)"

"There is one word which has neither form nor color, no one has ever seen it, its name is 'Fame' and yet every one undergoes all sorts of hardships to achieve fame. But just give it a thought, if your thoughts and actions are correct, fame will come to you on its own."

"As a part of his duties, a true Sadhu should be willing to do even the most menial tasks, and such a one alone can realize God. We have with us our 'Bade Rasoiyaji' (The chief cook), he himself has been

cooking for us since last 40 years, and on any one day, if he is unable to cook, he will not take his meals in this ashram, however delicious they may be, such as 'Malpua and Dudhpak' but he will cook his own humble 'Khichri' in his kutia. This is an example of true Sadhutva."

"But unfortunately, true Sadhus are rare. We come across false Sadhus everywhere. Even if there is only one true Sadhu among several false ones, then by virtue of his Sadhuta, all will survive. The Tilak mark on a Sadhus forehead is a declaration that his head is now surrendered unto God and that it will neither bow down before any one nor can it be bought by material temptations."

"I prefer that Sadhu, who worships Ram and renders service unto people. None can keep on chanting 'Ram-Nam' for 24 hours. Therefore, whatever time remains spare, after our 'Bhajan', should be devoted to serving the people. The one who is lazy is not fit to be called a Sadhu."

"If he is sick, the Sadhu may go to a hospital and on getting well again, he should devote himself once again to 'Bhajan' and service. If this is not possible, let him sit in 'Nirvan Samadhi' and leave this world. Let him not be an excuse for people to remark that he Indian Sadhus are a burden on our society."

"Let me repeat with stress, one should leave a hundred tasks when it is meal time, and one should leave a thousand tasks to do 'Bhajan' and set aside one lac tasks when the occasion arises to render service unto humanity."

* * *

Salvation of Manekbhai

Chapter – 87

Manekbhai was a 'Bania' by caste. He had come for Gurudev's Darshan at Bhogibhai's insistence with great reluctance saying "I don't believe in that Guru of the 'Lohanas'." Yet after observing Gurudev's kindness, compassion and humanitarian outlook at close quarters, in Bilaspur Camp, he chose to become his disciple immediately.

When Manek kaka would be angry, his temper would exceed that of the famous sage 'Durvasa', but his faith in 'Ram-Nam' was as solid as a rock. On account of his temper, his only son had left him and this pained him immensely. Gurudev consoled him "Do not be sad, one who has no one of his own, I belong to him." Poojyashri kept his promise till the very end.

Later, after passage of time, Manek kaka came to Chitrakoot all alone for Gurudev's last Darshan. His health was shattered by severe illness. He stayed there for a week. On Kartik shood 3rd his condition worsened and for the past two days, he had been oscillating between life and death.

One devotee had carried him for Gurudev's last Darshan. Gurudev placed his benign hands on Manekbhai's head in blessing and after a few minutes, sent him back to his rooms. Then Gurudev spoke softly 'Manek Bapa ! Wait for a couple of days, why spoil every one's Chatruthi ? (Gurudev's Birthday).

On the morning of Chatrurthi, Valjibhai told Gurudev "Manek kaka is speaking incessantly and insisting on returning to Bombay, he is asking." "Have you got my ticket for Bombay ?" Poojyashri replied --- "His ticket (for last journey) is already booked for tomorrow." All were stunned.

In the evening Vimuben asked Gurudev "Bhagwan ! Tomorrow is Tuesday, with your permission, may I go Parikrama of Kamad Giri ?" Poojyashri remained silent for some time and said "Vima Beta ! Tomorrow, every one will go to Manek kaka's Baraat procession."

Exactly on Kartik Shud 5th at 11-30 a.m. after serving meals to saints and Mahatmas and after giving sweet rice to Arvindbhai (who had vowed not to eat rice till Bihar project was over), Poojyashri entered Manekbhai's room where kaka was lying semiconscious. Placing his benign hand on his forehead Gurudev spoke sweetly "Kaka ! Say 'Shri Ram' kaka opened his eyes and chanted "Shri Ram" four to five times and gazing at Gurudev's face he closed his eyes forever. Poojyashri said "Manek kaka has gone."

On returning from the crematorium Gurudev said "I think he was a great soul, his services in the eye camp were unprecedented, none can avoid death and considering this we must strive to give happiness to others, after all life is a bubble, and it is of no use if we grieve over it."

One is born on account of his past deeds, and cessation of Karma is death, this cycle of life and death will continue. Take care while you are alive that your time is not wasted because time once past, never returns. Therefore, do your 'Bhajan' while there is still time."

"Manek kaka's death was lucky, place of pilgrimage, Bank of Ganges and vicinity of Guru. I myself came here thrice in the past to die. First time when the Doctors diagnosed cancer, but I was saved, second time I came here out anguish and yet I survived. Now for the third time I have the death wish, though it will not be fulfilled. I instruct that all the ladies should prepare two 'Puran Polis' each for tomorrow, one for herself and one for someone else. As we celebrate birth, so we must celebrate a meritorious death."

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Before leaving Chitrakoot, Poojyashri said "when man is convinced that there is someone to protect him, then he becomes one with his protector (experiences non-duality with God) Therefore commence your worship unto the Lord with true enthusiasm because the Lord's worship is matter of experience and not of discussion or discourse."

"Be like a Judge while living in this world, while the Judge hears a case in court, he pays full attention but when the time is up, he leaves everything and returns home. Such attitude of detachment is essential for

all of us. While meditating, if you cease your thought processes and enter the inner self then alone you will be able to see the subtle universe."

Truly it is said

*"When I pass through this world,
I behave like the passer by through
a market, who though he is in
the market place is not a buyer."*

- Mirza Galib

* * *

Koyna Earth Quake

Chapter – 88

The Koyna earth quake of 11th December 1967, spread its' toll of death and destruction to surrounding areas. Thousands were rendered homeless and were in a pitiable condition.

Poojyashri was in solitude at Jalki near Sholapur, and when Arvindbhai, Keshubhai and ors. approached him for Koyna relief work, after detailed discussions, it was decided to provide houses for people uprooted from their homes by the earthquake.

On hearing the news, volunteers from among the devotees reached Koyna, Amidst mild tremors and strong winds, risking their lives, they started construction through skilled artisans.

On 28-1-1968, Poojyashri visited Koyna, saw the Camp construction and the sample of a newly built house and left by night.

One barrack was estimated to cost Rs. 7500/-, 5000/- was given by the Govt. and Rs. 2500/- by the 'Manav Rahat Mandal'. In the long list of donors, who had sent donations on account of their faith in the name of Gurudev, the leading names were, Mafatlal Group, Janmabhoomi Earth quake relief fund, Times of India 'Bhukamp Rahat Mandal' and 'Employees of Burmah Shell.'

Poojyashri's only policy was to rush to the place from where humanity called out in distress, trust in God and start working and as soon as the need was over, to send word to the donors not to send any more.

In this relief work, about 500 new houses were built in the Koyna region.

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Pilgrimage to Pashupatinath

Chapter – 89

In 1968, when we were in Anantpur, it was decided to go to Pashupatinath in Nepal for the Maha Shivratri. Despite his fatigue due to journey of Dwarika, from which he had just returned, Gurudev decided to go over there on such an arduous journey for pilgrimage. Indifferent health, cough and fever could not shake his resolve. He kindly permitted me to accompany him on this holy pilgrimage.

Originally we were to travel in relative comfort by his personal station wagon known as 'Hari-Jeep.' But while I packed up the luggage, message reached me that we were now to go by a regular bus and to take minimum luggage for the journey. Since Poojyashi was at Ramesh Bhaiya's place, I could not understand the reason for this change of plans.

Later I learnt that a patient, who was in a critical condition, had to be sent by 'Hari Jeep' to Vidisha Hospital and his condition did not permit bus travel. I was agitated, this meant that we were now to travel partly by bus and partly by train right up to Khatmandu and Gurudev's vows would not permit him to take even a glass of water on a train. Only such a saint can sacrifice his own comfort to be of solace to a patient in need; because of shortage of time, we had to leave for Guna by bus immediately.

Thereafter our train journey commenced. We had to change trains thrice. I asked the cooly at a transit station for a wheel chair for Gurudev to save him from fatigue of walking across long platforms and crossing over bridges while changing trains. Gurudev declined the use of a chair and gave me a peculiar look as though of rebuke and preferred to walk. At Kanpur, Bachubhai joined us, We crossed the Indian border and reached Birganj. Since we had enough money, we could have comfortably travelled by a Taxi upto Khatmandu, but Gurudev's economic nature would not permit such extravagance and we boarded a bus. Seeing his resolve to undertake all the discomforts consequent on such a journey, to save money, we now realized that it was merely due to insistence of

the rich devotees that he used means of comfort provided by them, but those means could not make him dependant on them for his equanimity of mind.

He remained equanimous and unaffected in his ascetic simplicity like a lotus flower, which though situated in water is not touched by it's wetness.

While boarding that bus, a fleeting vision of convoy of shining cars and palatial mansions of rich devotees which were always at the beck and call of Gurudev, passed in front of my eyes, but in front of that huge but ordinary bus, meant for common man, those magnificent things looked like dwarfs. This was the supremacy of simple asceticism over hedonistic mentality.

After a whole night's journey, we reached Kathmandu where the Pashupatinath temple is situated 3 miles away from the city on the banks of river Vishnumati. Around the temple, there was a dense crowd, resembling an ocean Tide. I Placed a blanket for Gurudev to sit on the river bank and a shawl as protection from the cold.

When I returned and did not see the blanket and the shawl _____ ! I stammered _____ ? He smiled ever so sweetly and said "The one who was in greater need, took them." That was his only reply. I shivered in imagination. This month of 'Magh' and biting cold of Nepal, surely the poor needy man's plight must have moved the compassionate and kind heart of Gurudev, and now by his grace, the man must be enjoying the comfort of the shawl and the blanket.

This journey was indeed meant to create a series of surprises for me. When we reached the temple, there was an endless que of devotees waiting for Darshan of Lord Pashupatinath. Sadhus with Tilak of all designs were all around. It was indeed doubtful if we could have our Darshan even after a wait of 3 hours.

For a second, my faith was shaken but within a couple of minutes a boy scout in uniform approached us and said "Come along Baba ! I will take you for Darshan." It was as though Lord Mahadev had become eager and impatient to meet Gurudev.

The boy took us right upto the inner temple. Gurudev bowed his head with reverence to Mahadevji and I bowed to my Shiv – swarup Gurudev. While I was doubtful whether this dense crowd would permit me to have even a distant glimpse of Mahadevji, it was only on account of Poojyashri that I got this rare opportunity to have Darshan from so near the idol on the sacred day of Maha Shivratri. Thus my mind bowed down both to Lord Shiva and Gurudev.

Next day, he said “Bachubhai ! It is essential to do charity in places of pilgrimage, so please invite all the Mahatmas and all the poor and the needy within this campus for dinner.”

The Mahatmas preferred to have pauwa and curd with sugar whereas for the needy puri, vegetables and sweets were ordered. Within a moment diners assembled in throngs and Poojyashri served them with his own hands.

He served the food briskly amidst voices raised in clamour, “Baba ! Sweets are needed here Bahenji give us puri, Baba let me have a little more sugar.” Those sweets, puris and vegetable and ‘Dahi-Pauwa’ for the Mahatmas were inscribed in golden letters, the maxim “wealth has three ends Charity, use or else destruction.”

These words uttered by Gurudev from time to time proved to be true, he used to say “Charity, whether done in the name of God or out of compassion or on humanitarian grounds is good. One who avoids doing charity and spends his wealth only on himself is headed for the third end of wealth i.e. destruction.”

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Dhar Eye Camp**Chapter – 90**

On 9-3-1968, the first operation was performed, when Gurudev entered the ward a patient had severe eyepain and was restless. Gurudev placed his loving hand on his head and the doctors gave the necessary treatment, and he got relief.

One local Brahmin volunteer asked “Maharajji ! You entered the ward with your sacred thread and even thouched the patient, was it proper?”

Gurudev replied solemnly “Only those who haven’t got ‘Ram-Mantra’ would get affected by touching patients, Ram-Nam has the power to purify the most impure. While serving a man in distress one must not discriminate on the basis of caste or creed. A Sadhu would not spare even his own body while serving others. With his sanctifying touch, he has the potentiality to make others like himself(Sadhus).” On 22-3-1968, the camp concluded with about 4000 operations

Another important development that took place at Dhar was :- on 30-3-1968 under Gurudev’s direction ‘The Sadguru Seva Sangh Trust’ was founded with Arvindbhai as its’ chairman.

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While in Ujjain, two representatives of Akashwani Indore – Bhopal-radio station came for Gurudev’s interview with tape recorders. The first question was, purpose of ‘Kumbha Congregation’, and secondly on approaching Gurudev, the interviewer commenced in his usual factitious manner “Babaji ! Give us your introductory back ground.” Pat came the reply “Introductory back ground ? Even God does not seem to know my back ground, real saints need no introduction, it is indeed futile and sheer waste of time to search the origin of a river and the background of Sadhu.”

Second question was "What is your basic principle?" "That is proper" Said Gurudev and added "My principle is that all of us should be happy and without ailments, all should have benevolent outlook and none of us should fall prey to sorrows and sufferings." Now the interviewer's tone softened, "Will you please throw some light on the purpose of the 'Kumbha'?" Gurudev replied "The country can prosper only if the society were to adopt and propagate religious virtues. Emperor Harsha commenced this custom of holding Kumbha congregation, with that idea in mind.

Formerly, when there were no rails or other swift means of communication, the Mahatmas utilized these congregations to meet and exchange their experiences at one spot in every three years, whereby social reforms could be thought out from these interaction of ideas. Now all that remains is mere rituals. Formerly there were learned exchanges and discussions but now only 'Roti' remains to be exchanged."

Once Haricharandasji asked for certain instructions concerning Badri Narayan Anna Kshertra. Gurudev told him that hence forth each one of them should take his own decisions consulting their own conscience and God, since he would not be available forever to take such decisions.

Till the 'Kumbha' Congregation lasted, meals were provided by organizing Bhandaras for thousands of saints and Mahatmas at Ujjain.

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Gurudev's Short discourses and discussions**Chapter – 91**

On 5th May, Poojyashri left Ujjain for Bombay via Jamnagar. Next day Gidhubhai Kotak came along with YogShaktiMa for darshan. Poojyashri gave a beautiful discourse on Yoga and added at the end.

“This contemporary race after Yoga is not correct. For getting the right answers, one must ask questions with humility. Nowadays, the process is reversed, formerly the thirsty (Seekers for knowledge) used to go to the well (source of knowledge) nowadays, the wells (The knowledgable) are searching for the thirsty (those who need to know). The first essential for our success in Yog-Sadhana is overpowering inquisitiveness for learning. If we love something with true intensity we would reach a stage when we can not live without it. That is why we say “Learn to love from the fish, which when separated from water gives up it's life. Till there is such an intensity in our Sadhana, there is no hope of God realization. Therefore do not try to impart merely by preaching, qualities to others, which you yourself do not possess. Such an endeavour is bound to fail.

Later Yog Shakti Ma remarked “Today I have obtained from Babu's pravachan, what I had been unable to achieve so far.”

* * *

The same evening he spoke to devotees :-

“As you would not entrust your beloved wife to the custody of another person. Similarly, God would not give custody of his wife ‘Laxmi’ to an unfit person. Treat Laxmiji as your Mata, use it judiciously to do charitable works and not for leading a life of idle leisure.”

“Primarily ours is an agricultural country, which needs, generous donors, dedicated social workers and far sighted administrators. If all of us work in harmony, we can never come to any harm. Though I won't be here to see it, you shall see that if all the three sections work together, the entire nation will undergo transformation in next 15 years,”

That year's GuruPurnima was celebrated in Bhopal. An extract of his speech delivered over there is given below :-

"Yesterday Dhebarbhai had come with an invitation from Vinobaji that I should deliver spiritual talks to people and also give them advice. What advice can I give ? I am not academically qualified and I know only one maxim" First 'Pet' (hunger) then 'Theth' (Deliverance)."

"Half of our people are semistarved and you can't expect them to listen to spiritualism, or talks of immortality of the soul. Till one's hunger is pacified, he can not think about 'Non-duality' and such other topics. However this much is certain that there must be a limit to our wishes and desires. Unlimited wishes and uncontrolled desires can enslave us.

"One must have unity in his thoughts, speech and actions and for that, there should be consistency in his internal and external self. We can broadly divide human beings in 3 categories. The Satvik (Divine) who, when their past meritorious deeds were exhausted, got born on earth from among 'Devatas', the second category are those who are born from human to human form and in them though there is 'Satva' (Divinity) in small portions, they also have the 'Tamas' (Dark attributes).

The 3rd category is of people who have just been promoted from animal form go human form and they constitute the major section of our society and with them the maxim 'First Pet (Hunger) and then Thet (salvation) alone can work.'

"If you wish to detach from this type of mere body consciousness, come to me, once you achieve this state of detachment, you will realize the inner powers that are lying dormant within you."

"God realization can be experienced only if there is an indomitable and irrepressible desire for same, but once such an urge arises in you, then all your sins will dissolve and you will surely attain inner peace and tranquility during your 'Sadhana'."

After Orissa and Bihar, his health went on deteriorating, and at the insistence of devotees he agreed to rest for a while. He reached Devas from Bhopal via Jaipur, Pushkar and Ujjain.

* * *

South Gujarat flood Relief**Chapter – 92**

On 6th August 1968, 12 rivers of South Gujarat were in spate and breaking their banks they caused terrible devastation and destruction with their unprecedented floods in surrounding towns and villages.

The angry waters of river Purna (at Navsari) broke the bridge with its irresistible force, devastated farm house and destroyed homes. The extent of damage can not be expressed by mere words or in terms of rupees.

On hearing this terrible news, Poojyashri left his 'Solitary stay' at Mafatlal house in Devas and rushed to Navsari for the relief of the flood affected people. He met several devotees, and also contacted Arvindbhai and Devkaranbhai on phone. At the insistence of Arvindbhai, he agreed to stay in Mafatlal house over there. Volunteers visited village after village and contacted the flood affected people.

Then prompt relief was delivered to Surat, Navsari and Dang Dist. Due to lack of any political colouring behind this relief work, and the fact that it was carried out under the saintly personality of Gurudev, relief could be made available to as many as 30,000 families affected by the floods.

During this, Shrimann Narayan, Governor of Gujarat visited with his wife along with several news reporters to see the relief works and left fully satisfied. During his talks with the 'Sandesh' reporter, Gurudev said "Someone said in his speech, the floods are here to wash away sins of Gandhiji's death and those committed during the period of our self rule".

I feel saddened by such talk. It is a matter of shame and sorrow that we are not able to provide homes for the flood affected helpless families of poor farmers who have been rendered homeless and are without a roof over their heads. Their condition needs to be ameliorated."

After the 'Sandesh' reporter had finished his interview, shri Vadilal Dagli met Poojyashri and I give below an extract of the article that he wrote in the 'Commerce' monthly on 21-9-1968 :-

‘During my tour of the flood affected areas, I was impressed by two things :- (i) The fortitude of the people who braved this disaster with courage and creative equanimity, and by (ii) shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj, whose breath taking work, during Bihar famine, will always be remembered by people of that region with gratitude.

By nature, I am sceptical about ‘Sadhus’ and ‘Sanyasis’, so I met him with reservations, but when I saw him working, he reminded me of Gandhiji. Here was an old emaciated man, who had dedicated his entire existence and every drop of his blood for the suffering masses of India, without any distinction of caste, class or creed.

Even his spirituality was based on the foundation of service to humanity. He told me ‘Pehle Pet, Peechhe Thet’ (First hunger then salvation). He expressed his deep anguish that while huge wealth was lying unutilized in temples, millions of our countrymen are suffering from either floods or droughts. How can the temple priests even dare to touch this wealth, which belongs to the people ?

What impressed me most was his grasp of details, no wonder he has at his command thousands of dedicated followers in U.P., M.P., W. Bengal and Saurashtra. Except for a few hours of sleep, he works ceaselessly, organizing projects to alleviate the sufferings of the people and also to make our country selfreliant in matters of food.

In many ways, he resembles Vinobaji but with one vital difference. Vinobaji too is a great saint, inspiring millions to renounce their worldly goods but he lacks organization. Ranchhoddasji’s capacity for organization is infinite. We have heard about organizational man but in the person of shri Ranchhoddasji, I met an organizational saint.”

After completion of relief work and after spending a few days at Devas, he came straight to the next eye camp.

Trully,

*“He that conquers hearts of Men,
Is better than one who conquers cities.”*

* * *

Grace on Arvindbhai

Chapter – 93

On the evening of 5th August, just before the floods of Gujarat, Poojyashri told me “Do not disturb my solitude for four days. Put my tiffin outside the room on time but do not enter the room, else the vibrations will get disturbed and the work that I wish to do will be incomplete or totally unsuccessful.”

He never told us in so many words as to what he actually did during those days of solitude. However, after the flood waters had receded in Gujarat, Arvindbhai told us that during the floods, though the Mills, adjacent to the Mills of the Mafatlal Group of Industries were badly damaged by the destructive effects of the floods, the New Shorrock Mills and the Navsari Cotton Mills were not affected.

The machinery of these mills remained untouched by the swirling flood waters which were just in the adjacent compounds.

These mills of Mafatlal group were saved by the grace and blessings of Gurudev shri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj.

We recalled that Gurudev had told in his blessings to Arvindbhai in the Bihar Camp “Whatever you donate to this relief work will soon be made good to you.” These blessings of a true saint, straight from the heart, had stood like a dam against the flood for the benefit of a devout and dedicated disciple like shri Arvindbhai, who had donated lacs and also given his unstinted support and services to the people of Bihar in their hour of need.

Truly it is said :-

*“Where calamity abounded,
Grace did much more abound.”*

* * *

Pichhor Eye Camp

Chapter – 94

The camp began with the first operation on 1-10-1968 and concluded with 3226 operations on 21-10-68.

Dr. Ravishanker Dixit of Pichhor Chhatrasal Degree College had come for Gurudev's Darshan. I give below extracts of an article written by him in the daily 'NIRANJAN' :-

"On hearing the fame of shri Maharajji, out of natural curiosity, I went for his darshan on the evening of 2-10-68. As a seeker after knowledge, I sat there upto 9-00 p.m. His humanitarian outlook is practical and inspiring. In that eye camp, I saw what man can truly do for man. Maharajji accepts only one principle that of "Humanism". He is busy inspiring dedication to the ideal of service to humanity and works for the welfare of people and also to eradicate disparity among human beings."

* * *

In Pichhor, Gurudev's health deteriorated from day to day. Having accepted illnesses of others and cured them by Yogashakti, now his frail body was emaciated. In Ansuyaji he did 'Yoga Sadhana' but after coming in contact with people his 'Maha-yog' of curing people had begun.

On seeing his unbearably painful and incessant cough and laboured breathing, Devkaranbhai spoke with tearfilled eyes "Bapu ! I want your permission to take you to Bombay for check up by a good Doctor."

Despite such severe illness, he said in a serene voice "This body is yours, do as you please". Thus he agreed to come to Bombay.

* * *

In Bombay a panel of 7 doctors examined him carefully. On Dev – Diwali day, Dr. Nathwani got him admitted to Bhatia Hospital. Poojyashri told the Doctors over there "We ought to have a hospital like the christian missionary hospital at Vellore. Though a Sadhu should not envy anybody, I envy that hospital. Doctors must have pure character and in order to be called a real doctor he should come to the hospital with the sole intention of being of service to humanity."

The X-Ray showed that the left lung was damaged and the heart was enlarged, yet Gurudev did not care to know all these details.

Coincidentally, Vedbhai's father was to be operated upon on the same day, and his leg was amputated. When Poojyashri came to know about it, he told Vedbhai "Come, let us go and have a look at your father." On going there, he placed a loving hand on the head of Vedbhai's father and asked him "How are you?" He got up and said with folded hands "Please give me your blessings" Poojyashri said "You better rest" and went forward towards the lobby where several poor and middle class patients offered their pranam. He smiled at everyone with folded hands and stopping near a dejected patient he asked "How are you brother?" Seeing such compassion, the overwhelmed patient wept tears of gratitude.

After Poojyashri's visit, Vedbhai's father felt immense relief from pain and despite his diabetes and gravity of his illness, he recovered sufficiently to get discharged from the hospital in just 15 day's time. The doctor said with surprised "The Almighty has saved him."

Poojyashri was in Bombay for 40 days, and at a time just 2 to 3 visitors were permitted to be in his room. The other devotees would sit in the lobby and chant "Shri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" Gurudev conversed with everyone for a few minutes and when his health permitted, he would join in the Dhoon and even gave short pravachans.

During these days, Swami Chinmayanandji came to the hospital to enquire after Gurudev's health. Both of them sat in silence, just smiling at each other and after a while asking permission to leave, Chinmayanandji said "Swamiji ! May God restore you back to good health."

On account of his extreme love and concern about Gurudev's health, despite his age and illness, Yogiji Maharaj of Swaminarayan sampraday came to see him. During the course of conversation, Gurudev said "Your Gurudev had said that the Adivasis, the backward and the poor must be uplifted from their present state." And added "He further wished that social reforms should be popularized among them, and he considered this work as his life's mission. You have both wealth and volunteers. Why not use them into service for this deserving cause?"

By prayers of saints, tears of devotees and efforts of doctors, his health improved considerably and he was permitted to leave Bombay.

While leaving Gurudev told the devotees, "I will return by the end of December, meanwhile you may adopt a few more good habits. Always remember that purity in action is attained by treating others as we would like to be treated by them. Without at least that much purity to begin with, we can not even dream of realizing God."

Along with Suresh and Ghanshyambhai, he left for Vellore by plane on 5th December. He spent a few days over there in solitude.

For Gurudev's use over there, Vallabhbhai had sent a new Ambassador car from Calcutta. He travelled by that car up to Hubli only, then he sent back the car and along with Suresh and Ghanshyambhai he continued his journey by train.

On 21st Dec. with just a cloth bag in hands, he met Prahladbhai in Ganeshpuri proceeded further to meet Nandlalbhai at Dongra.

At Dongra, he told Prahladbhai "Whenever we meet, behind every meeting along with the joy of meeting, there always lurks the sadness of separation. It is truth alone which can give us the everlasting joy of companionship." He continued "The famine of Manbhoomi in Bengal brought about this revolutionary change in me. Once upon a time, in village Kandara (in Manbhoomi) there was a public fair where widows were being sold off like cattle, the buyer may be a Hindu or a Muslim. Even today you can find it on record over there that I was instrumental in stopping this evil custom. People started an agitation against this custom and drafted a prohibitory law, which was passed by Lord Hunter the Viceroy."

"Because I took lead in abrogation of this evil, the Nawab of Manbhoomi had me beaten up to the level of unconsciousness, and believing me to be dead, the muslims just left me and went away. In Bengal, the people used to call me Banadasji, Bengali Baba, Maha Prabhuji etc". "After that incident and due to other circumstances or reasons I left Bengal." From Dongra, he came to Vidisha via Bombay.

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Vidisha Eye Camp**Chapter - 95**

The first operation was performed on 19-1-1969. During the camp, Gurudev's health took a downward turn once again. During a day, the coughing would cease hardly for a few hours. Just a couple of steps would make him breathless, yet he kept on giving detailed instructions based on thorough knowledge of the camp.

Whenever he felt better, he would visit the stores, the kitchen and the wards and bestow his kindness and grace on the suffering patients.

Once, during an attack of cough, cold and breathlessness, the nasal discharge was constricting his breathing. Instead of using a handkerchief, he asked for a plastic bowl and let the discharge drop in the cup like a small stream. A devotee, who was unable to bear this, got up and wiped off Gurudev's nose with a kerchief.

Poojyashri joked "What have you done?" "You have stopped the nicely flowing 'Abhishek' (Benediction)." Even the choking discharge appeared to him as 'Abhishek', this was the extent of his mental serenity.

As previously predicted by him, the 18th and the last eye camp in his physical presence, concluded with 4000 operation. On 31-3-1969 This resembled the 18 Chapters of Bhagwat Geeta, which starts with 'Arjun Vishad Yoga' and concludes with 18 chapters.

The 'Manav Seva Geeta' of Gurudev began with the first eye camp at Chitrakoot, organized for the benefit of Kanakba and Tanna family and reached the 18th number conducted in Gurudev's physical presence.

Poojyashri explained the new meaning of 'Yagna'. He said "True Yagna consists of serving those afflicted by natural calamities or on account of sufferings to atone for their past deeds. The mantra for the Yagna is "God resided in the hearts of the humble poor." And the 'Aahuti' (services rendered) in such an yagna results in the fragrance of true self-satisfaction."

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From Vidisha, he came to Bombay via Pushkar. He said in Ram Mahal "Till Now I saw others weeping though I did not weep. Now I do not know why, yet I am weeping. Am I afraid of death or of being separated from you all ? I could see your tears yet none can see mine."

"Above all, my heart cries out for the nation, if this narrow provincial mentality continues, our nation will disintegrate and with that, our ancient culture will be destroyed. Our culture had been under attack many a time in the past and we have undergone sufferings and given supreme sacrifices to preserve it. These efforts of ours are recorded in history."

"If one really wishes to serve the nation, why should he hanker after titles? "If you do your duty faithfully and with dedication, the posts and the titles will follow you and not the other way around."

Devotees took him to Devlali for rest. But instead of improving, his health deteriorated further. Insomnia and fainting spells were added to the long list of illnesses, such as gas, asthma, cough and nausea. Once when it took more time for him to come out of the fainting spell, Dr. Nathwani was called to Devlali and with the consent of every one, the Doctor arranged to shift him to Bhatia Hopsital Bombay for treatment, where he was admitted in a special room.

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Gurudev continues his healing mission**Chapter – 96**

The hospital life began from 15th April 1969, Except a couple of doctors, none was allowed inside to visit Gurudev. Dr. Samani, started treatment after investigations such as X Rays, cardiogram etc. and medications and injections were prescribed to give relief and recovery. He had to be given oxygen at hourly intervals, for 5 to 10 minutes.

Dharamshibhai aged about 45, was suffering from the fatal illness of pancreas and the operation had failed. Doctors opined that the case was hopeless, and advised that the necessary property documents should be got executed. He was in the room just adjacent to Gurudev.

Each day and hour of his life was full of pain and suffering. The documents as advised were executed and now all waited for the end. His mother came to know that Gurudev was in the next room. She approached me with a glimmer of hope and said "Though the doctors have given the verdict and I know that the boy can not survive, I have no other expectation but for him to have Darshan of Gurudev so that his death may be sanctified." "If Maharajji permits, I will bring the boy here on a stretcher."

I explained "Ma ! Gurudev's condition is serious, except the doctors, no one is allowed in his room. They have further warned not to give him any sad or shocking news. What can I do ? She went away disappointed. Next day, she came again and said "Ben ! Open the door just a crack, I will have Maharajshri's Darshan and spread my hands on my son's body." That did it, no sooner these words were spoken, though ever so softly, and outside the closed doors of the room, yet a mother's sentiment reached Gurudev behind closed doors, he said "Damu ! Who is there ? Let him come in." Maji, who never expected such sublime grace, was overcome with emotions and stood devoutly in the door with folded hands and wept."

Gurudev asked in a voice full of compassion "Ma ! What is the matter ? Why are you crying ?" And he sat up in bed. I explained briefly. Before my narrative was over he asked Ramesh, who was present at his bed sided, "Come on, lift me up, we must go with Ma."

When Rameshbhai carried him to Dharamshibhai's bed side, he said "That's enough, now release me". And he stood near Dharamshibhai. The anaemic, weak and emaciated patient greeted him with trembling hands folded in supplication. Poojyashri place a loving hand on him and repeated 3 times "You will surely get well."

On that occasion it seemed that the 'Sanjivani Shakti' (Power of restoration of life) was flowing through his speech, gaze and his entire being. He stayed there for a minute and then said "Let us return," and briskly walked back to his room.

Next day early in the morning, Dr. Samani said "Baba ! What kind of miracle did you perform yesterday on my patient next door ? Now he is improving and seems sure to survive" Then he added "How strange ! Here we are, waiting with baited breath, worried about your health, and you possess powers to cure a last stage patient without any medication. So many devotees are worried about your health, why don't you use these powers on yourself ?" He smiled in reply "All of you are here to look after me." Then added softly, "Samani ! Rog (Disease) can be cured but 'Bhog' (Affliction of others, taken on his own self, for their relief) have to be borne with fortitude. All of you can help in bearing them, that is all."

After some days, Dharamshibhai went home fully cured. The news spread throughout the hospital and everyone wished their relatives to be cured, but none could get inside Gurudev's room.

The ban applied to common people while the same was not the case with doctors and nurses. They came on one pretext or other and wondered 'Can this man effect a miracle cure ?' With dangling stethoscopes and wondering minds they came, offered pranam, and left.

Often Poojyashri recited a couplet by poet Keshav meaning "The confused 'Keshav' wonders as to how Shiva, whose only wealth is a piece of tigerskin and an old bull (Nandi), and who subsists by begging from others, can give so much wealth to his supplicant devotees who throng at his door step ?" How appropriately this couplet applied to Poojyashri ?

Now it was impossible to stay in the hospital and since he had to be at the foundation ceremony of Anantpur hospital, Gurudev discontinued the treatment and despite objections from devotees, left for Anantpur.

The heat and dust of Anantpur worsened his health, he had unprecedented cough and asthma, and doctors over there were unable to help. Let alone solid, he could not take even liquid food. Devkaranbhai and Dr. Nathwani were called to Vidisha. Next day, on being shifted to Bombay, things came under control.

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Rajasthan was in the grip of famine, and having sent all to the famine site, at the instance of devotees, Gurudev agreed to stay in Bangalore.

Before his departure, he addressed the devotees;- "Do not run after mere learning, else you will be confused, 'surrender' and 'Bhajan' are the only essential ingredients for devotion."

"None can advance merely by the worldly path, the spiritual path, though difficult, is the only path. 'Mala' [Telling of beads], going to temples, and 'namaskar' before idols, if not accompanied by pure conduct are mere rituals and cannot elevate us. If one can not be of help to others, his life is worthless. Such a one merely sees God in temples but God does not see him."

"Our country boasts of spirituality yet there is not even one Sadhu who can save it from ruin. The national ills are cause of my illness and nothing else." One lady asked, "Why can we not see an Yogi's powers even when his body is operated upon?"

Gurudev replied "Yogic power permeate and pulsate through the yogi's veins, I will explain by an example, if you take out an eye, it can not see, since it lacks the element of sight."

The lady asked "Are the things realized by nerves?" Poojyashri said "Now you have understood, the power permeates due to the presence of 'Chetna' [The life force].

The lady asked again "Where does the power go on death?" He asked "Who dies when a person dies?" "The body". Was the reply.

"How can you say that, the body is right there with all the organs in tact." The lady guessed again "The soul?"

Poojyashri ended her problem "He, whom you consider dead is the life force, with its departure the power also goes away".

Another devotee asked "Do the Mahatmas experience physical pain?" Gurudev replied "The body suffers, therefore even a Mahatma gets affected by it." Devotee :- "How so? the soul is said to be beyond suffering." Poojyashri "That is correct, yet as the water rises in the form of waves by contact with the wind and as the iron gets affected by magnet, similarly, so long as the soul is related to the body the experience of Pain is bound to be there."

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On another topic he had said. "In my life I have not done 3 things, I did not disciples, they initiated themselves."

"I did not take medicines, you gave it to me." And I have not done 'Bhajan', it happens on its own by concentrated and unwavering mind". "When one realizes the presence of God in all beings then the self surrender on its own, the body rises as it is bidden and works automatically like a machine."

Then looking at Vebdhai he said "Never forget the principle of seeing God in all, serve the needy attain your salvation. Never be unjust or partial to anybody. Non-violence, Celibacy, non-accumulation and non-stealing are principles of 'Ved Bhagwan'."

Observing Poojyashri's health Vebdhai broke down. Gurudev smiled "Why do you cry for this mortal body? Ved Bhagwan! Look at the wall not at the painting on it, the picture changes yet the wall remains the same. Try to understand the 'Element of soul' which is immortal.

Truly,

*"if words fly upwards,
and the thoughts remain below;
Words without thought,
never to heaven go."*

- W. Shakespeare.

* * *

Protection of Devotees**Chapter 97**

In Bangalore, a lady came for darshan with full faith and devotion. Her face looked sad and in pain due to illness. Placing an empty bottle before Gurudev, she said "You are the only person who can relieve my agony and suffering, please sanctify the water in this bottle and make it potent to cure my illness with 'Mantra'."

Poojyashri smiled and made a sign for her to place the bottle in front of him. She did so and went away after offering pranam. After her departure Gurudev said "That lady has terminal T.B. she believes that if she drinks the water sanctified by me, she will recover from her illness. Now let me show you what I do. I will say 'O God ! I Know nothing, these people do not believe it, you know why people are sad, they make mistakes according to their nature, why trouble them, please forgive them God.'"

This is the only 'Mantra' that I Know, people drink the water and get cured....."

Then he got the bottle filled with water and 3" space at the top was left empty for particles to get affected, then he said, "Now come on all of you repeat with me, I know nothing, these people " he chanted the above seemingly 'Mantra' meaninglessly about 4 to 5 times and while people all around were busy laughing, thus having diverted their attention, he took off his glasses and looked at the bottle with a steady piercing gaze and said "Now, close the bottle and give it to the lady."

Patients were treated in this manner, in accordance with their faith and belief, I have myself seen hundreds of them taking water thus sanctified and getting really cured.

He used to say, "Sadhu is public property and even his body belongs to the needy of our nation."

His illness was strange. During a particular period, while he was suffering from acute cough, asthma and fever and yet if there was an

important meeting or discussion, he could cast off his illness and spend as long as 3 hours sitting up giving forceful pravachan without a shadow of ill effect or a single cough. But afterwards he would revert once again to his former condition. At an appropriate moment I asked "Why so much suffering for a master Yogi who commands all siddhis?" He replied "When people are too much oppressed by their sufferings, then approach me as a last resort, I am saddened by their affliction, which are results of their past deeds of this or past births and therefore they have got to be borne by way of atonement. Someone can take over and relieve them; thus either they suffer or if I take over, then I suffer. These illnesses are of various kinds. Some are curable by mere blessings while some last for 6 months. A few of them are such that they can depart only with the body.

If I agree to bear them on their behalf, with the grace of God, the period of suffering can be shortened. But it is certain that this resultant of their past cruel deeds has got to be borne and suffered for expiation of sins." Now everything became clear to me.

During the Lanka war, shri Ram shielded Vibhishan from the invincible 'Shakti', Which was sure to kill him; but when shri Ram took it upon himself, he too had to undergo pain for some time, else who would believe in its' power?

Thus Gurudev bore the ills of others for a shorter duration and called them 'Bhogs' [Bearing] and not 'Rog' [Disease].

Thus it has been truly said :-

"In their afflictions, the Lord was afflicted."

* * *

Famine Relief in Rajasthan

Chapter 98

After a detailed survey of various districts, on Gurudev's instructions. Arvinbhai, Morarjibhai, Mohanbhai, Keshubhai, Rambhai and others selected Barmer and Jaisalmer dists. for relief work. Due to lack of roads, these areas were difficult to supply with provisions and yet they were selected for that very reason.

The relief work began in May 1969, with Barmer as the main Camp. The state govt. also provided assistance.

Since the climate was suited for Bajra, purchases for the same commenced from Agra, Kanpur and Bhatinda. Dispatches to sub-camps were made from the main camp at Barmer. In each such-camp volunteers stayed for 3 to 4 days and provided relief for about 2 to 3 thousand people per day.

The crowds were so huge that Bajra was required to be distributed up to 1-00 a.m. in the night. Shri Girdhar Ram Bapa of virpur arranged for such additional expenses. Among the people who came, about 25 % asked for free supply. The scarcity, though in a mild form had been there since last 7 years and due to their staple food Bajri, not being available, people were subsisting on Jawar.

Rajasthan has a chronic water shortage and therefore use of milk in tea was out of the question. The volunteers either took black tea or used milk of the she camel. Even in those days, a pot of water would cost as much as Rs. 3/- and local people used to bring water on camels, to sell it at the camp site.

The volunteers used to purchase water to slacken the thirst of those needy people who had to stand in the queue for several hours in the scorching heat of the sun. Naturally these volunteers had to forget the luxury of a daily bath and they could bathe hardly once in 15 days when they visit the main camp at Barmer.

The problem of meals too had to be tackled in a peculiar manner. They carried bajri roti, chatni and onions in their shoulder bags and ate whenever and wherever they became acutely hungry.

For dinner, they had to sit up in a room fully boarded up so as to avoid the desert sand getting inside their belly along with their meal. They could eat green vegetables only when they visit Barmer. At such times a meal of 'Khichri' and vegetables was considered a royal feast.

The desert was so stark, barren and sandy that a timid person could not stay there even for a few hours. Bhimada had the strongest sandy winds and when the volunteers would wake up in the morning, they would find their bedding and even bodies sprinkled with a fine coating of sand. Under these stringent conditions, the volunteers served for 4 long months devotionally and with full faith and dedication, bearing all sorts of hardships and deprivation.

That year, Barmer Dist. happened to have good rains and the farmer were lent tractors to till their lands. When the rains arrived, Rajasthan assumed a festive mood and the camp concluded on Janmashtami day.

During the relief work Poojyashri was at shri Ram-kumar Mills Guest house in Bangalore. Keshubhai kept him fully briefed on Barmer relief works. On 11-7-69, he had written "Bapu ! Due to lack of rains, people are in a very bad condition please do something about it."

By coincidence, it was raining in Bangalore and on reading this letter, Gurudev went out, looked at the sky and said, "What are you doing here, Go and rain in Barmer."

On the night of 13th he said, "Phone Barmer and see if everything is alright ? When he was told, "All trunk lines to Barmer are disrupted ." He said, "Never mind, God will do the rest" and went to sleep.

In Barmer Dist., the volunteers were getting ready to return to the main camp after distributing Bajra to Harsani Village. Suddenly strong and gusty winds started blowing and brought about heavy rains, accompanied by thunderclaps and lightning. Rambaba, Rambhai, Tribhuvanbhai and ors. were overjoyed and danced in the rain while chanting a dhoon with Gurudev's name. They postponed their journey back to camp and slept for the night over there itself.

At midnight Tribhuvanbhai woke up to drink water. In the dim light of the lantern, while he went to take out water from the pot, a snake bit him on the right foot and he cried out in pain. All woke up abruptly and saw a 4' long black snake hissing near the matka. All of them beat it dead on the spot and pressing above the bite on Tribhuvanbhai's foot they bled out all the venom from his system and tied a cord tightly above the wound and near his knee joint and after rendering first aid, took him to the hospital at Barmer.

Meanwhile Tribhuvanbhai was shaking with terror and sweating profusely. Suddenly he remembered the words of Gurudev when they were sent to Barmer :- "Whatever happens, none can harm you, do your duties sincerely" and at this recollection, he gathered courage and hope.

After examining, the surgeon said, "He can not be saved and on examination of the snake, to determine the degree of his poison, the doctor lost all hopes. Rambhai put the dead snake in a sack and took it back to camp. The devout volunteers never gave up hope. Remembering Gurudev's name, Keshubhai kept applying a piece of the ice to the affected spot.

After 3 hours the green colour of enom faded and by evening, Tribhuvanbhai was discharged from the hospital. Prior to this, the dead snake was placed in a glass jar in a closed room in front of Gurudev's photo. Next day, when the room was opened, a terribly foul smell came out of it and the jar containing the snake was found broken in two, with the snake shredded to pieces.

Chhelubhai spoke out with pentup emotions. "Tribhuvanbhai, this jar symbolized your body, and by transferring the calamity from your body to this glass jar, Gurudev has saved your life."

When Gurudev learnt about all this, by post in Bangalore, he said with deep feeling of gratitude "Tribhuvan was saved by God, despite having been bitten by a venomous snake, how can those who are doing God's own work, ever come to any harm?"

What humility ? The Barmer relief work and Tribhovanbhai's incident assured the devotees once again that though he may not be physically among them, in subtle form, Gurudev would always be with them to guide and protect them.

* * *

Selfless 'Karm Yogi' from Chitrakoot eye camp and as the disciple increased in number, and picked-up duties, without their noticing the fact, he gradually withdrew leaving the responsibility on their able shoulders. He visited Bharatpur for one day only, watched over Surat relief work from a distance, and now was totally absent from Rajasthan, He attended fully only till Ranka relief camp.

Now perhaps he believed that his role as 'Karm-Yogi' must also come to an end. As a father joins in his child's play till he is big enough to play with the other children of his age on his own and then he quietly withdraws, similarly it seems, Gurudev, having set the devotees firmly on the path of social service was withdrawing on the pretext of illness.

* * *

Despite the serenity of the Bangalore atmosphere, Gurudev rarely looked happy. He seemed immerse in thoughts. At times when he attempted to walk a little, he soon became breathless. Thus due to lack of improvement in his health, a cardiologist, Dr. Parmeshwaran was called.

The Doctor, with a view to note his reflexes, told him "Please walk a little" but when he started a brisk walk, the doctor stopped him and said, "Slowly, slowly, there is no hurry at all" and added softly "your walk is as fast as your thought processes." Poojyashri merely smiled.

Dr. Parmeshwaran was a devout person and recognizing Gurudev's saintliness, he kept himself available for help whenever he was called.

Once when Gurudev complained of pain in the stomach, he said "Do not worry it is just a little gas." Gurudev said, "Why should I worry when 'Parameshwar' incarnate is treating me ?" The whole atmosphere lightened by his pun on the word 'Parameshwar.'

After a while he said, "My only worry is about these girls, Damu and Parvati, they have been my companions in joy and sorrow and they have spared no efforts in my service."

Dr. Parameshwaran expounded his philosophy :- He recited a Sanskrit couplet which means :- "Despite having the king of mountains (Himalaya) as father-in-law, a friend like 'Kuber' (Treasurer of Gods) and a son like Ganesh (The banisher of all evils) the Mahesh himself subsists on alms, thus only God's will prevails."

"Leave then to God and do not worry" after a little chit chat, the doctor departed.

* * *

On 21-8-1969, he was in a bad shape right from the morning, and said, "Call Devkaran in Bombay to come here by 11-00 a.m. tomorrow and if he so desires let him bring along Dr. Nathwani and Dr. Samani.

Gurudev had a heart attack on the same day and Dr. Parameshwaran and Dr. Giriraj rendered lot of help. It was essential for him to get some sleep. At midnight he was given an injection for sleep yet it failed to produce the desired result. At 2-00 a.m. Gurudev told Dr. Parameshwaran, "All the pills and injection are working on the doctors only." Dr. Parameshwaran said, "Please try to sleep."

In contrast, at Shivpuri, despite severe pains, he had slept without an injection, but now, when all medical means failed, at Dr. Parameshwaran's request, he closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Next day, Devkaranbhai came with Dr. Nathwani at 10-30 a.m. Then exactly at 11-05 a.m. in the presence of as many as 5 doctors, Poojyashri got a severe attack of paralysis and fainted. The entire left side was affected.

At noon he was shifted to a nursing home. Next day, Dr. Parmeshwaran asked, "Did you sleep at night?" "Yes I slept soundly" Gurudev replied, "Thank God", said Dr. Parameshwaran and added "On account of worries about you, I could hardly sleep at night."

After 8 days stay in the nursing home, he was shifted to Bombay. Later after 10 days in september 1969, he went to Poona for rest.

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Famine Relief Work in Kutchh, Surendra Nagar and Banaskantha Districts

Chapter -99

In 1970, the grim spectre of famine fell on Kutchh, Surendra Nagar and Banaskantha. Since Poojyashri was then in Poona after obtaining instructions from him, Arvindbhai, Keshubhai, Vallabhbhai and others, surveyed these areas on behalf of 'Shri Sadguru Seva Sangh' and then briefed him about the situation.

If Gurudev were to agree to undertake the work then 'CARE' (Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere) agreed to supply Rs. 4.50 crores worth provisions, for the assistance of the people of Gujarat, unconditionally.

The 'CARE' organization would provide bulk milk powder, the packers and container suppliers were ready to do the packing and sealing work free of cost, 'CARE' would also bear the shipping charges and the whole scheme, to start relief work in January, took shape in Poona.

As soon as the first consignment arrived, it was brought before Gurudev. As instructed by him, it was decided to prepare 'Sukhdi' by mixing corn flour, milk powder, ghee and jaggery: and Puri and Shakkar para by adding salt and spice, instead of jaggery. However, later it was decided to prepare only Sukhdi, to suffice for 10 lac people per day.

The Central Govt. waived custom duty and also undertook to dispatch the goods to their destination. The 'Sadguru Seva Sangh Trust' had the responsibility of preparing and distributing the 'Sukhdi'. Govt. of Gujarat agreed to bear part of the costs.

After everything was decided, Gurudev reminded :- "In works of public service, renunciation, generosity, nondiscrimination and selfless service are of prime importance." He added "Have firm faith and dedication unto God, he will look after the undertaking and see that the funds are available." Let your conscience, in its selflessness and purity, be your true guide, people who are slothful and jealous can find faults even with the works of Mahatmas, ignore them."

"This work is like dealing in coals, but be careful. Never mind if our hands are blackened by work but our faces (our conscience) should always be spotless and shining with self confidence and the satisfaction of having performed our duty."

"All who are born are destined to die, King, Commoner or Fakir, what will remain for memory will be our name and fame either good, bad or indifferent. So do your duty and worship God for the man who neither worships nor renders service has no right to live."

Keshubhai asked, "Bapu ! Why are we often afflicted either by floods or famine ?"

Gurudev :- "Partly it is due to the influence of 'Kali' and partly due to our own deeds. Mercy, compassion, and proper conduct are all things of the past. One who has hoarded grains, wishes that there should be famine so that by his illegal stock, he can become a millionaire. In all other sectors the thinking is similar, such thoughts generate evil vibrations and they in turn affect the weather. Therefore, if we wish to be happy and prosperous as a nation, then we will have to first purify thought process, set aside our selfishness and pray to God that our country may not suffer such calamities so that we can be free to devote our energies to constructive works."

"The ills of my country are my ills, how can the doctors cure them ? I am sad because we have to import our food. In reality, we do not lack food, what we lack is compassion in our hearts."

Doubts were raised about the feasibility of preparing and distributing 'Sukhdi' on such a massive scale.

He told them not to worry and start the work with the name of God on their lips and that from where-ever he would be, he would continue to pray for their success and take active interest in their works.

On 1-1-1970 the work of transport and distribution of 'Sukhdi' began. The kitchen was kept working for 24 hours a day and 60 jeeps and 15 Truck were pressed into service to send 'Sukhdi' to thousands in 3 districts and each person was given 100 gms. of same.

The needy were also supplied Bajri, 5 kg. per youngster and 9 kg. per adult. A total of 6000 volunteers were busy in managing the relief

operations. Initially people were reluctant to eat 'Sukhdi' but gradually they liked it so much that they thrived on it.

The nourishing and healing effect of the benign 'Sukhdi' improved their health and made their minor illnesses disappear. Thus 'Sukhdi' fulfilled its' name literally, ' Sukh[happiness] di [giver] ' The relief work continued with sustained enthusiasm and without interruption.

During these 10 months, none of the volunteers was ever afflicted either in person or illness of any one of his family members. Despite continuous movement of scores of vehicles none met with an accident.

How can there be a mishap or misery where a divine saint like Gurudev had given a guarantee for it's success and security.

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The Divine light grows dimmer**Chapter 100**

For the first days of his stay in Poona, Gurudev was not at all well. At times when he was being fed (due to paralysis he could not do so himself). He would spit out everything that was given to him. The doctors had to order a glucose drip to maintain his strength, but he would get the drip removed and his weight went down to mere 61 pounds.

At times he could not recognize any one and behaved like a child. For him all the 24 hours seemed to be same, and occasionally he would get a short nap only at the end of the night just before sunrise.

The Bombay doctors paid visit from time to time. Those from Poona came 2 to 3 times a day. Despite all the attention and treatment and having nurses for round the clock attendance, there was steady deterioration in his health and he became extremely weak.

At a last resort, the devotees undertook community 'Jap' of 13 crores of 'Ram-Nam'. Inside his room there would be recitation of 'Ram-Charit manas'. As though on account of this, there was a slow but steady improvement in his health. Once while the recitation was on, he spoke softly "Arvind !" and Arvindbhai, who was doing the 'Path' at a short distance away, came nearer.

Poojyashri placed his hands on his hand and pressed it gently and looked at him with a steady loving gaze. Arvindbhai was shaken by it and said in a voice choked with emotions "Baba ! Baba ! Please leave this sickbed and get up. Even if it be necessary I am willing to exchange my and my entire family's life in return for your life, please get up. I can not bear this any longer." And tears welled up in his eyes.

A couple of minutes passed. Then with absolute self control Gurudev spoke, "Arvind ! Now it is a lost cause (My illness is incurable). Better concentrate on the task that you have undertaken, may you farewell and may God give you happiness and joy."

"Baba ! I am your child and a child gets lost without the mother what can I do without you ?" said Arvindbhai.

Poojyashri took hold of both his hands in his own and pressing them gently he said "Arvind ! I am always with you."

From October onwards one doctor would always be there round the clock, to look after his health. Dr. Babubhai Ghelani was from Bombay and on his arrival Gurudev said "The meritorious acts of past birth has brought you to me."

Babubhai would sit near Gurudev most of the time and frankly ask various questions to which Poojyashri would reply satisfactorily.

Once he asked "Bapu ! Depite having so many saints in our country, why are we in distress ?"

Gurudev :- "True, we have many Siddhas and Mahatmas. One true saint has the power to keep people happy and contented within 80 mile radius around him and do whatever he chooses, but all true saints are not willing to do so. Secondly this country has become unfit for a true saint, I too wish to relinquish this body and leave.."

Next day, he told Babubhai "Listen, some visitors are expected tomorrow and my health will deteriorate, you better be vigilant." As predicted, the visitors came and Gurudev had a severe coughing spell, and despite medication and injections, it took 3 1/2 hours to bring it under control. Babubhai asked in the evening "Bapu ! How could you have such advance knowledge ?" Poojyashri :- "All my visitors do not possess good vibrations, their bad vibrations can affect my health."

On the occasion of Arvindbhai's birthday, "Shrikhand" was prepared. After the meal was ready, a 'Thal' was placed before Poojyashri. Dipping a finger in the 'Shrikhand' bowl, he placed a tiny particle on his tongue and said, "Excellent, it has all the ingredients like sugar, cardamom, saffron etc. each one excelling the other, similarly Arvind has all the good virtues, yet like the mild sourness of 'Shrikhand' he also has a temper which is essential to manage the large organization that he heads, yet to advance on the spiritual path, that same temper would be an obstruction." He added.

"If you want to see the truth behind these lines of Gita :-

-An yogi of past birth, whose sadhana is interrupted, is granted birth in the home of a rich and pious person -

Then take a look at Arvind, he is an yogi whose sadhana was in complete in past birth, in one of his past incarnation, he was 'Bhamasha' of Rana Pratap, now he has become 'Bhamasha' of Ranchhoddasji.

Then he took Shrikhand from the bowl and told Babubhai, "Have this, today also happens to be your daughter's birthday; at moment, she is playing with kids in Morbi and the mother has gone to Virpur for darshan of Jalaram Bapa." Gurudev was right, it was the birthday of Babubhai's daughter. In addition, without being asked, Poojyashri told him all the details of his family background, mode of worship, financial condition, his father's business and about misbehavior of their relatives towards his family, as though he himself had experienced all this in person.

Babubhai asked in great surprise "Bapu ! How did you know all this ? Poojyashri smiled "Have you not invented the T.V. with your science ? Similarly in Yoga we have such powers of vision at a distance both in time and space. The mind of a sadhak gets purified and becomes steadfast after attaining 'Trikuti-Bhang' and when he gets 'Sahaj-yoga' then merely by glancing at a person, that person's whole life passes before his eyes and if he concentrates on an object, he learns all about its basic characteristics.

The yogi, who succeeds in awakening his Kundalini and unites it with 'Sahastrar' by piercing the intervening major six centres of consciousness, acquires several miraculous Siddhis."

"What may appear impossible or imaginary today is proved scientifically at a future date. The recent manned landing on moon is a concrete example. Similarly an Yogi can perform feats which are not acceptable to our intellect. The Yogic science, though very difficult, is deep and profound. If we could achieve synthesis of science and yoga, then the world would literally turn into heaven."

On the day of Babubhai's departure for Bombay Poojyashri became quite emotional. Babubhai said, "Bapu ! I have not been of much service to you, now you have the services of the greatest specialists and they in turn consider themselves fortunate for the opportunity of being of service to you.

Poojyashri replied, "As a sadhu, I am least concerned with these labels 'Big' and 'Small', for a sadhu there is no defference between Mafatlal bungalow and gutter. My only possession was a 'Kamandalu' and I have renounced that too. Today I have nothing yet you may ask whatever you wish."

Just a day earlier, Govardhanbhai had told me that all Babubhai lacked was a son, and he had 3 daughters only; since Poojyashri had asked Babubhai on his own, to ask for a boon, I spoke softly "Bhagwan ! Babubhai has only 3 Laxmis."

Promptly Gurudev said, "Oh ! That is quite easily remedied, just pick up a coconut, giving a son is no problem, let him ask something else."

Babubhai said, "Bapu ! A son was born but he could not survive."

Poojyashri :- "I know, at that time your wife's life was in danger and a saint (Yogiji Maharaj) had saved her. Your family deity is not favourably inclined towards you, yet within next 12 to 15 months you will have a son this time everything will be fine."

The meal given to a Sadhu with love, and services rendered with true dedication can never be in vain."

After finishing his work in Bombay, Babubhai returned with his wife. On the occasion of Poojyashri's birth day, Babubhai asked in all innocence :-

"Bapu ! people talk a great deal about your age, some say you are 150 years old, others say 1500, in reality. How many years have you completed today ?"

Poojyashri :- "Fifty Six"

Babubhai :- "How can a great saint like you tell such a false thing ?"

Poojyashri :- "Babubhai ! I never tell a lie, I said I am 56 but I have not revealed which digit comes before it 1-2-3-4 or 5, yet this talk of 1500 years is all bogus. Though I have seen Akbar, Kabir, Clive, Baji Rao, Nana Fadanvis and Laxmibai." Any way, why do you want to know the age of a person, who is dead before his death ?"

He continued "Once while I was in Tibet, I came across a saintly Lama who was also a great 'Siddha', he had told me that in future, I would suffer from a paralytic stroke and none would be able to save me from it."

"Even today, in Tibet you may come across Yogis who are 300 to 400 years old. Do not bother about age, see the deeds and ideals of an individual's life."

Babubhai :- "I have heard that your blessings always come true and you have blessed many households with a son, how do you do that?"

Poojyshri :- "Giving boon of a son is a very simple matter ; just see how our Arvindbhai manages such a gigantic enterprise for which he need not remain physically present all places. His trusted managers administer the Mills and work according to directions given to them by Arvindbhai. Similarly this world can be compared to a Mill owned by God. The Sadhus are endowed with special powers of managing it. These managers (Sadhus) are further authorized to give blessings. A true Sadhu is also authorized to change even the destiny by his blessings."

"A true Sadhu's real power lies in his devotion and dedication unto God. He will never ask anything for himself, because if he asks for something then he has to pay the price in one form or other."

"A Sadhu's blessing can work miracles in life because it is the power of almighty God that works through such blessings." After a while he took Babubhai's hand in his own and gently rubbing his right hand over it, he said "Mark my words, my Babubhai too will have a son and this time your wife's health will also be fine."

Despite his horoscope and predictions of other astrologers, Babubhai got a son by Gurudev's blessings within the next 12 months and his wife's health also was absolutely normal. To commemorate Gurudev's boon, the son was named 'Ashish.'

From Rajkot Dr.Chunibhai Popat once asked Gurudev "Your X Rays are clear, the heart has no defect and your lungs also are relatively clear, then why so much suffering?"

Poojyashri said, "Listen despite being Gods, Shivji sleeps in the Himalaya, Vishnu sleeps on the bed of snakes at the bottom of the ocean and Brahma works like a potter (Moulder and creator of beings), all these are resultants of our actions and so doctor you better continue to treat me as an ordinary patient and not as a Mahatma."

Poojyashri had a profound knowledge of Ayurveda and could cure various ailments with ease. He could describe the characteristics of several Ayurvedic ingredients, in great and minute details as though the standard reference books like Charak Samhita and Nighantu were on the tip of his tongue. Yet for his own illness he followed his doctor's orders meticulously, and even when they prescribed an article of food or medicine which was unpalatable, yet he would follow the doctor's orders without arguments.

The different capsules for Asthama, Cough, Vitamins etc. would be mixed in water and as soon as the mixture was ready, he would remark "So my Panchamrut is ready" and then he would drink it in one gulp.

Once after measuring his lung capacity (first time after the paralytic stroke), with various machines, he was taken out for car ride and then the fresh results on these machines showed increased capacity and the puzzled doctor asked "Bapu ! any other patient, under similar conditions, would have reacted in quite an opposite manner, how could this happen ?" He replied with a smile "We Sadhus are accustomed to open air and therefore the same suits us better than the atmosphere of a confined bungalow."

On one occasion he was asked "How can we realized the Atman?" and what would be our experience at that time ?"

Poojyashri :- "It is impossible to realize the Atman without complete surrender of our self unto God and total purity in our thoughts, speech and actions. A vendor of sweets can tell you how to prepare such sweets, he can also give you as sample, a few pieces of that sweet in your hand for yourself but the experience that comes by eating those pieces is realized only when you actually eat them. Same applies to self realization. That is a matter of experience, which can not be discussed or expressed by mere words."

Once during a fit of intermittent coughing Gurudev sang a Gujarati folk song which means :- O Guruji ! I will sing thy name and praises of Govind (Lord) in old age because if I sing now, my wife objects; My mother-in-law objects....., So let me sing the same in old age."

There by jocularly, Poojayashri reminds us that when we are young, we postpone 'Bhakti' thinking, now is the time to enjoy life, Lord's name can be taken later, but when that time comes, we are so oppressed by bodily ills that despite our inclinations, in old age we are not able to truly devote ourselves to the service of the Lord and we realize that our whole life has passed by in vain.

At such times, when Poojayashri sang this song, the heavy atmosphere in his room would get a bit lightened.

He always say, "You saw me coughing, while coughing one can only say 'Hai-Hai and not Ram-Ram' and therefore make 'Bhajan' a part of your daily routine, as natural and regular as your 'Bhojan' (Meals).

Despite his full co-operation and round the clock medical care, Gurudev had a sudden and severe attack of dysentery. A special 'Commode-Chair' was arranged for him and would be brought in when he would say 'Chair.'

Once, inspite of due medications he had as many as 20 motions in 12 hours and when he said 'Chair' for the 21st time, everyone was worried for his well being. Seeing Dr.Chunibhai's grim face he joked "The leaders too want chairs, but mine is a Commode Chair" and when everyone smiled, he did not ask for the chair again for that particular day. It was capacity of Gurudev to create humour even in the midst of most worrissome situation that enabled all of us to bear the extreme agony of his fast deteriorating health.

His food intake had gone down to almost nothing. Once at dinner he remarked. "Formerly I was known as 'Paramhansji' but it is only now that I have become a true 'Paramhans.' From my routine, all restrictions of clothes, sacred thread and mode of eating, are completely gone."

I could make out his deep sadness behind these words. While eating, the nurse would lovingly prompt him to eat a little more and in so

doing touch his dish, or his clothes would get disturbed while changing sides and above all his inability to sit in the proper posture and perform 'Sandhya' and 'Gayatri' were indeed painful for such a religious and devout person, and yet even when he was in deep sleep in the night, the chant of 'Ram' would be coming out from his lips, though in a muffled voice.

While waking up, he would often sing the following hindi Bhajan;-

"O Ram ! friend of the meek and the humble have at least this much mercy on me. If I am enfeebled while fighting with the worldly delusions, do come to my aid and carry on the fight on my behalf; Please have this much mercy on me.

Amidst turmoils of this world, even if I forget you, then my dear Raghav; atleast you do not forget me, have this much mercy on me."

* * *

During our stay in Poona, the Surendra Nagar relief work was planned and implemented. Doctors were amazed at Gurudev's boundless energy and agility of mind, even while bedridden. He issued careful and detailed instructions without any hesitation as if several computers were working in co-ordination to prepare a massive operation of supplying 'Sukhdi' to a million people per day non stop for 10 months. He would do it with as much ease as other people would plan a dinner for 10 Guests for 10 days.

After two months of shuttling between Bombay-Poona, the doctors requested him to come to Bombay so that they could provide instant service at a very short notice.

He merely said, "Do whatever you think fit", then called Rambhai and said "Ram ! We are going to Bombay and if possible we will stay at Surya Apartment."

On 7th March 1970 Poojyashri was brought to Bombay by Air..

*"The wheels of Life are slowing down,
Though slowing, they run smoothly."*

* * *

The Curtain Descends**Chapter :- 101**

After coming to Bombay, Poojyashri became more and more quiet. He would be lost in thoughts. Supported by a Pillow, he would sit in bed and stare at the ceiling for hours, without any conversation, or complaint. On occasions, when he chose to talk to doctors, the discussion would be mainly about India's social and economic conditions.

He reminded us of the great Bhishma, lying on the bed of arrows, or of shri Krishna under a Pippal tree reclining cross legged, waiting for the fatal piercing arrow to end it all.

The condition of his health was synonymous with that of the Nation. Famines in quick succession, floods Earth quake, political uncertainty, division of Congress, all these were forebodings of impending calamity and gloom.

Gurudev, too watched on like shri Krishna with anguish at this on going internecine strife. How can his bed be less painful than Bhishma's bed of arrows on the battle field of Mahabharat ?

Gradually and consistently his stomach pains were increasing. Even two morsels of food or a sip of water made him breathless and oxygen was required to be administered. Initially an enema could clear his bowels but gradually it lost efficacy. The entire body became skinny and emaciated. Doctors visited often and at times 3 to 4 times in a day.

Even this terminal, painful and incurable illness could not deprive him of his capacity to provide love, comfort and solace to others. Hearing of his deteriorating health Rameshbhaiya had come from Anantpur. Biding him farewell Gurudev said, "Now (Because I would be soon gone), We shall never meet again. Come as soon as you hear the news on radio. The body will not be cremated immediately, so bring along the other 2 brothers to place wood on my funeral pyre. Do not grieve because my mission will continue; Go child go and be happy."

Rameshbhai could only say "I will not go."

On the third day he got high fever, his body had never been so hot. On the fourth day there was swelling on the legs. He merely said with detachment "This happens in the last days."

On Ram Navmi day, in the morning the stomach pain was unbearable, yet despite such severe pain in consideration of the eagerly awaiting devotees he came out for a few minutes and while returning to his room, folded both his hands towards them as though in final farewell.

The next day when Dr. Nathwani was trying to locate a vein to control his bellow like breathing for administering an injection he said "Doctor ! Give up, you won't find the vein." Speaking thus in a muffled voice Gurudev smiled. The doctor gave up.

On the 11th day of Chaitra shudi he called Rambhai and said "Listen, Ram ! Even if you are unable to take this body to Pushkar, do not cremate it in a public crematorium, take it to any spot in the forest and perform the last rites, because the location of the last rites, will continue to inspire seekers and sadhaks alike."

On the 12th tithi the pain was unbearable yet when the doctors came, he lay there perfectly quiet and without uttering a single word. While getting up to go Dr. Nathwani asked in a heavy voice "Won't you please say something ?" Poojyashri explained with a sign "Now I am giving up this body." Then with folded hands asked for forgiveness for having given so much trouble to all the doctors. Before Dr. Nathwani's departure, Gurudev turned his face towards the wall.

On 19th April, 1970, 13th tithi of Chaitra shudi between 2 to 3.00 p.m. placing his right hand in Rambhai's hands he said "I am leaving Ram !" and closed his eyes forever.

*"He lives, he wakes, his death is dead;
Not he, mourn not for him."*

Epilogue

*"Can mortal frame,
ever encompass,
such sublime grace?"*

Before such doubts arise in our minds, we are indeed grateful to Damuben for writing this chronicle, though of a very short span, of Gurudev's life. We owe so much to the great saint and yet it is very difficult to pay our homage unto him, who in the words of Ravindranath Tagore was and still remains unapproachable by our Ego filled minds, because as Tagore says (To God) :-

*"Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live,
the poorest, the lowliest, and lost.*

*When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach
down to the depth where the feet rest, among the poorest,
lowliest and lost.*

*Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the
clothes of the humble among the poorest, and
lowliest, and lost.*

*My heart can never find it's way to where thou keepest
company with the companionless among the poorest,
the lowliest and lost."*

Geetanjali

Then how do we assure him that his teachings and works have
not been in vain ?

His disciples like Arvindbhai, Rambhai and Damuben and innumerable others have amply demonstrated by their ceaseless toil and untiring zeal dedicating themselves to social services and continuing with the Eye camps, as though they wish to say :-

*"Do we begin again to commend ourselves unto him,
or need we as some others, letters of commendation
from him or to him; For in as much as he was the
apostle of love and service, we are his own epistles,
written not on tables of stone, but on fleshy
tables of the heart"*

- St. Paul

I offer my humble pranam to Gurudev - Gordhandas.

श्री
राम

Publishers :- Shri Sadguru Sadan Trust - RAJKOT